Several Diſcourſes,

Viz.

Proving Jeſus to be the Meſſias.

The Prejudices againſt Jeſus and his Religion conſider'd.

Jeſus the Son of God, proved by his Reſurrection.

The Danger of Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity.

Chriſt the Author: Obedience the Condition of Salvation.

The Poſſibility and Neceſſity of Goſpel Obedience, and its conſiſtence with free Grace.

The Authority of Jeſus Chriſt, with the Commiſſion and Promiſe which he gave to his Apoſtles.

The Difficulties of a Chriſtian Life conſider'd.

The Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*.

Children of this World wiſer than the Children of Light.

By the Moſt Reverend

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

Late Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*.

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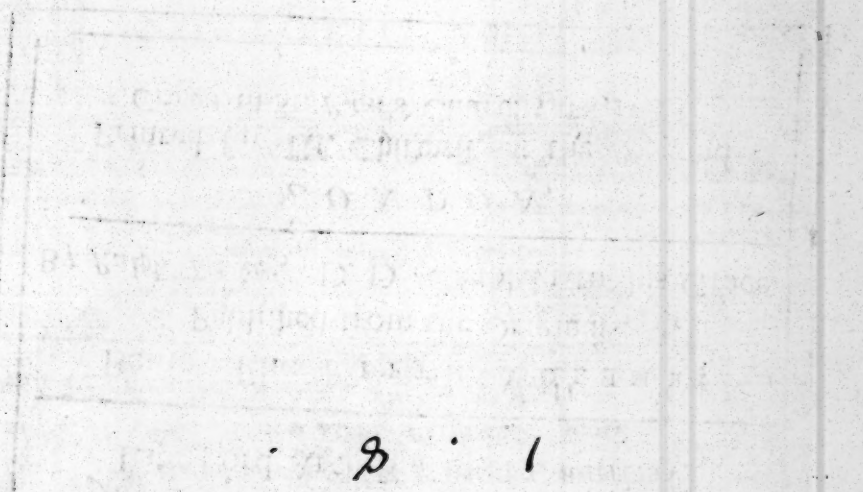

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SERMON I.

Proving Jesus to be the *Messias*.

MATTH. XI. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

Now when John had heard in Prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his Disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come: or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, go and shew John again these things which ye do hear, and see. The Blind receive their sight, and the Lame walk, the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear, the Dead are raised up, and the Poor have the Gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.

ABOUT the time of our Saviour's appearing in the World, there was a general expectation of a Great Prince, that should come out of *Judea*, and govern all Nations:

tions: This the *Gentiles* had from the Prophecies of the *Sybils*, which spake of a great King that was to appear in the World about that time. So *Virgil* tells us, that the time of *Augustus* was the utmost date of that Prophecy, *Ultima Cumæi venit jam carminis ætas*: And *Suetonius* tells us, *that all over the Eastern Countries, there was an ancient and constant Tradition, that such a Prince should spring out of Judea*: And for this Reason it is, that our Saviour is call'd by the Prophet, *the Expectation of the Nations.*

But more especially among the *Jews*, there was at that time a more lively and particular expectation, grounded upon the Predictions of their Prophets, of a Prince whom they call'd the *Messias*, or *the Anointed*; and those who were more devout among them, did at that time wait for his appearance; as it is said of *Simeon*, that *he waited for the consolation of Israel.* Hence it was, that when *John* the *Baptist* appeared in the quality of an extraordinary Prophet, *they sent from Jerusalem to enquire whether he were the Messias?* John 1. 19. *The Jews sent Priests and*

Levites

Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. The *Sanhedrim*, to whom it belonged to judge who were true Prophets, sent to know whether he was the Messias or not? *He would not take this honour to himself*, but told them the Messias was just at hand; and the next day, *when Jesus came to be baptized of him*, he bare record, *that he was the Son of God, and that he saw the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him.*

So that it is plain that he knew him, and bare witness of him, which makes it the more strange, that here in the Text, *he should send two of his Disciples to enquire*, whether he were the Messias or not? *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* That is, art thou the *Messias*, or not? for so he is call'd in the ancient Prophecies of him, ὁ ἐρχόμενος, he that should come, *Gen.* 49. 10. *The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come.*

For the resolution of this difficulty, it is very probably said by Interpre-

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ters, and I think there is no Reason to doubt of it, that *John* the *Baptist* did not send this Message for his own satisfaction, but to satisfie his Disciples, who were never very willing to acknowledge *Jesus* for the *Messias*, because they thought he did shadow and cloud their Master. From whence we may take notice, how Men's Judgments are apt to be perverted by Faction and Interest, and that good Men are too prone to be swayed thereby; for such we suppose the Disciples of *John* to have been; they will not believe their own Master, when they apprehend him to speak against their Interest; for they knew that they must rise and fall in their Reputation and Esteem, as their Master did. They believed that their Master was a Prophet, and came from God; yet for all that, they could not digest his Testimony of Christ, because that set him above their Master; which they were sagacious enough to perceive, that it tended to the diminution and lessening of themselves. And that this was the thing which troubled them, appears plainly from the Complaint which they make to their Master, *John* 3. 26.

3. 26. *The Disciples of* John *came to him and said, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bareſt witneſs, behold the ſame baptizeth, and all men come to him.* This troubled them, to ſee him invade their Maſter's Office, and that he began to have more Followers than *John* had; *he baptizeth, and all men come to him.*

This prejudice *John* had endeavoured to root out of their minds, by telling them, that he had always declared that he was not the Meſſias, *v.* 28. *You your ſelves bear me witneſs, that I ſaid, I am not the Chriſt, but that I am ſent before him.* But when he perceived it ſtill to ſtick with them, and that they obſerved all his Actions, and the Miracles that he wrought, as if they had a mind to pick a quarrel with him (for St. *Luke*, who relates the ſame Story, tells us, that when our Saviour had healed the *Centurion*'s Servant, and raiſed from the dead the Widows Son at *Naim*, the Diſciples of *John* ſhewed him all theſe things) I ſay *John Baptiſt* perceiving that they watched him ſo narrowly, ſent two of his Diſciples to him, that

they might receive full satisfaction from him. And St. *Luke* tells us, that upon their coming to him, he wrought many of his Miracles before them, to convince them that he was the true Messias, *Luke* 7. 21, 22. *And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and of evil spirits; and to many that were blind he gave sight*; and then said to the Disciples of *John*, *Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and to the poor the gospel is preached; and blessed is he that is not offended in me.*

So that you see that the Reason why *John Baptist* sent to our Saviour to know whether he was the Messias, was not to satisfie himself, for he had no doubt of it; but perceiving his Disciples to be ill-affected towards our Saviour, and hearing them speak with some envy of his Miracles, he sent them to him, that by seeing what he did, and hearing what account he gave of himself, they might receive full satisfaction concerning him.

I have been the longer in the clearing of this, that Men upon every appearance of contradiction in the Evangelical History, may not be too forward to suspect the truth of it; but may be convinc'd, that if they would but have patience to examine things carefully, they would find that the Story does sufficiently vindicate it self; and tho' it be pen'd with great simplicity, yet there is sufficient care taken, to free it from being guilty of any contradiction to it self.

The Occasion of the words being thus cleared, there are in them these two things considerable.

First, What it was that *John* the *Baptist* sent his Disciples to be satisfied about; and that was, *whether he was the Messias or not? Now when John had heard in Prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his Disciples.* The Circumstance of his being in Prison, seems to be mention'd, to intimate to us the Reason why he did not come himself along with them; he sent two of his Disciples to him, who said un-

Vol. V. to him, *Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?* And then,

Secondly, The Answer which our Saviour returns to this Message; *Jesus answered and said unto them, go and shew John again the things which ye do see and hear; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them; and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*

So that these words contain, *First*, the Evidence which our Saviour gives of his being the true Messias. *Secondly*, an Intimation that notwithstanding all this Evidence which he gave of himself, yet many would be offended at him, and reject him; *blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me.*

First, The Evidence which our Saviour gives of his being the true Messias: And to prove this, there were but *two* things necessary.

1. To

1. To ſhew that he was ſent by God, and had a particular Commiſſion from him.

2. That he was the very Perſon of whom the Prophets foretold that he ſhould be the Meſſias.

The *firſt* of theſe he proves by the Miracles which he wrought; and the ſecond, by the correſpondency of the things he did, with what was foretold by the Prophets concerning the Meſſias; the Prophecies concerning the Meſſias were accompliſh'd in him.

Firſt, By the Miracles which he wrought; *the blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raiſed up.* Here is a brief enumeration of the ſeveral ſorts of Miracles which our Saviour wrought, and theſe were a teſtimony to him that *he came from God*, and was ſent and Commiſſioned by him to declare his Will to the World. So he himſelf tells us, *Joh.* 5. 36. *I have a greater*

witneſs

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neſs than that of John, for the works which the Father hath given me to finiſh, the ſame works that I do, bear witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me. Upon the Evidence of theſe Miracles, *Nicodemus* a Ruler among the *Jews*, was convinced that he was ſent by God, *John* 3. 2. *We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do theſe miracles that thou doſt, except God be with him.* Nay his greateſt Enemies were afraid of his Miracles, knowing how proper an argument they are to convince men, *John* 11. 47. when *the Chief Prieſts and Phariſees* were met together in Council againſt him, they concluded, that if he were permitted to go on and work Miracles, he would draw all men after him. *What do we?* (ſay they) *for this man doth many Miracles; if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him.* This they ſaid, upon occaſion of the great Miracle of raiſing *Lazarus* from the Dead.

And in Reaſon Miracles are the higheſt Atteſtation that can be given to the Truth and Divinity of any Doctrine;

ctrine; and ſuppoſing a Doctrine not to be plainly unworthy of God, and contrary to thoſe natural Notions which Men have of God and Religion, we can have no greater Evidence of the truth of it, than Miracles; they are ſuch an argument, as in its own nature is apt to perſwade and induce belief. Vol. V.

All Truths do not need Miracles; ſome are of eaſie belief, and are ſo clear by their own light, that they need neither Miracle nor Demonſtration to prove them. Such are thoſe ſelf-evident Principles which Mankind do generally agree in; others which are not ſo evident by their own light, we are content to receive upon clear demonſtration of them, or very probable Arguments for them, without a Miracle. And there are ſome Truths, which however they may be ſufficiently obſcure and uncertain to moſt Men, yet are they ſo inconſiderable, and of ſo ſmall conſequence, as not to deſerve the atteſtation of Miracles; ſo that there is no reaſon to expect that God ſhould interpoſe

terpose by a Miracle, to convince Men of them.

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Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.

But for such Truths as are necessary to be known by us, but are not sufficiently evident of themselves, nor capable of cogent Evidence, especially to prejudiced and interested Persons, God is pleased in this Case many times to work Miracles for our Conviction; and they are a proper Argument to convince us of a thing that is either in it self obscure and hard to be believed, or which we are prejudiced against, and hardly brought to believe; for they are an Argument *à Majori ad Minus*, they prove a thing which is obscure and hard to be believed, by something that is more incredible, which yet they cannot deny, because they see it done. Thus our Saviour proves himself to be an extraordinary Person, by *doing such things as never man did*; he convinceth them, that they ought to believe what he said, because they saw him do those things, which were harder to be believed

believed (if one had not ſeen them) than what he ſaid.

Miracles are indeed the greateſt external confirmation and evidence that can be given to the truth of any Doctrine, and where they are wrought with all the advantages they are capable of, they are an unqueſtionable demonſtration of the truth of it; and ſuch were our Saviour's Miracles here in the Text, to prove that he was the true Meſſias; here are Miracles of all kinds, *the blind receive their ſight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raiſed up.* For the nature of them, they are ſuch as are moſt likely to be Divine, and to come from God, for they were healing and beneficial to Mankind. Our Saviour here inſtanceth in thoſe things which are of greateſt benefit and advantage, and which free Men from the greateſt miſeries and inconveniencies; the reſtoring of ſight to the Blind, and hearing to the Deaf; ſoundneſs and health to the Lame and the Leprous, and life to the Dead. And then for the number of them, they were many; not one inſtance

Vol. V. instance of a kind, but several of every kind, and great multitudes of most of them; and for the manner of their operation, they were publick, in the sight and view of great multitudes of People; to free them from all suspicion of fraud and imposture, they were not wrought privately and in corners, and given out and noised abroad, but before all the People, so that every one might see them, and judge of them; not only among his own Disciples and Followers, as the Church of *Rome* pretends to work theirs, but among his Enemies, *to convince those that did not believe*; and this not done once, and in one place, but at several times, and in all places where he came, and for a long time, for three years and a half; and after his death, he endowed his Disciples and Followers with the same power, which lasted for some Ages. And then for the quality of them, they were Miracles of the greatest magnitude; those of them, which in themselves might have been performed by natural means, as healing the Lame, and the Leprous, and the Deaf, he did in a miraculous manner, by a word

or

or a touch, yea and many times at a great distance. But others were not only in the manner of their operation, but in the nature of the thing unquestionably miraculous, as giving of sight to those that had been born blind, and raising up the dead to life, as *Lazarus*, after he had lain in the grave four days; and himself afterterwards, the third day after he had been buried; which, if there ever was or can be any unquestionable Miracles in the World, ought certainly to be reputed such. So that our blessed Saviour had all the Attestation that Miracles can give, that he came from God. And this is the *first* Evidence of his being the Messias.

The *Jews* acknowledge that the Messias, when he comes, shall work great Miracles; and their own *Talmud* confesseth, that *Jesus the Son of Joseph and Mary did work great Miracles*; and the History of the Gospel does particularly relate more and greater Miracles wrought by him, than by *Moses* and all the Prophets that had been since the World began; so that we may still put the same question

question to the *Jews*, which they did in our Saviour's time to one another; *when Christ cometh*, when the Messias whom ye expect comes, *will he do more Miracles than these which this Man hath done?*

But, *Secondly*, this will yet more clearly appear by the correspondency of the things here mentioned, with what was foretold by the Prophets concerning the Messias.

Not to mention innumerable Circumstances of his Birth, and Life, and Death, and Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, together with the success and prevalency of his Doctrine in the World, all which are punctually foretold by some or other of the Prophets: I shall confine my self to the particulars here in the Text.

First, It was foretold of the Messias, that he should work miraculous Cures. *Isa.* 35. 4, 5, 6. speaking of the Messias, *he will come and save you; then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstop'd; then*

then ſhall the lame man leap as an Hart, and the tongue of the dumb ſing; this you ſee was fulfilled here in the Text. 'Tis true indeed, the Text mentions another Miracle which is not in the Prophet, that *he raiſed the dead*; but if God did more than he promiſed and foretold, this is no prejudice to the argument, if all that he foretold was accompliſh'd in him. Beſides, the *Jews* have a Proverb, that God is not content to perform barely what he promiſeth, but *he uſually doth ſomething over and above his promiſe*. That the Meſſias ſhould *heal the blind*, and *the deaf*, and *the lame*, *Iſaiah* Propheſied; and God makes good this Promiſe and Prediction to the full; the Meſſias did not only do theſe, but which is more and greater than any of thoſe, *he raiſed the dead to life*.

Secondly, It was likewiſe foretold of the Meſſias, that *he ſhould preach the Goſpel to the poor*, Iſa. 61. 1. *the ſpirit of the Lord God is upon me, becauſe he hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek*; εὐαγγελίζεσθαι πτωχοῖς, *to preach the Goſpel* or *good tidings to the Poor*; ſo the LXX render the

words; and they are the very words used by our Saviour here in the Text. 'Tis true indeed, this was no Miracle, but it was the punctual accomplishment of a Prophecy concerning the Messias, and consequently an evidence that he was the Messias. But besides, it had something in it which was very strange to the *Jews*, and very different from the way of their Doctors and Teachers: For the *Rabbies* among the *Jews* would scarce instruct any but for great Reward; they would meddle with none but those that were able to requite their pains; The ordinary and poorer sort of People they had in great contempt, as appears by that slighting expression of them, *Joh.* 7. 48, 49. *Have any of the Rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? but this People who knoweth not the Law are cursed.* And *Grotius* upon this Text tells us, that the Jewish Masters had this foolish and insolent Proverb among them, that *the spirit of God doth not rest but upon a rich man*; to which this Prediction concerning the Messias was a direct contradiction: *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach*

the

the Gospel to the Poor. In old time the Prophets were especially sent to the *Kings* and *Princes* of the People: but this great Prophet comes *to preach the Gospel to the Poor.* None have so little reason to be proud as the Sons of Men: but never was any so humble as the Son of God. our Saviour's whole Life and Doctrine was a contradiction to the false Opinions of the world; *they* thought the rich and great men of the World the only happy persons, but *he* came to *preach glad tidings to the Poor,* to bring good news to them whom the great Doctors of the Law despised, and set at nought; and therefore to confound their pride and folly, and to confute their false Opinions of things, he begins that excellent Sermon of his with this Saying, *Blessed are the Poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.*

Thirdly, It was foretold of the Messias that the World should be offended at him, *Isa.* 8. 14. *He shall be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel.* And *Isa.* 53. 1, 2, 3. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the*

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Lord revealed? he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him; he is despised and rejected of men, and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not; and this likewise is intimated in the last words of the Text, *and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* Intimating, that notwithstanding the great works that he did among them, which testified of him that he came from God, notwithstanding the Predictions of their Prophets concerning the Messias, were so clearly and punctually accomplish'd in him; yet notwithstanding all this, they would take offence at him upon one account or other, and reject him and his Doctrine; but even this, that they rejected him, and would not own him for their Messias, was another Sign and Evidence that he was the true Messias foretold by the Prophets; for among other things this was expresly Predicted concerning him, that he should be despised and rejected of men.

And

And thus I have done with the Firſt thing I propounded to ſpeak to; namely, the *Evidence* which our Saviour here gives of his being the true Meſſias.

Firſt, The many and great Miracles which he wrought, prove that he came from God. And,

Secondly, The correſpondence of the things he did, with what was foretold by the Prophets concerning the Meſſias, declare him to be the true Meſſias.

I now proceed to the next thing I propounded to ſpeak to, namely,

Secondly, An *Intimation* in the Text, that notwithſtanding all the Evidence Chriſt gave of himſelf, yet many would be offended at him, and reject him and his Doctrine. In ſpeaking to which, it will be very proper to conſider,

Firſt, How *the Poor* came to be

more diſpoſed to receive the Goſpel, than others.

Secondly, What thoſe Prejudices are which the World had againſt our Saviour and his Religion at its firſt appearance, as alſo thoſe which men have at this day againſt the Chriſtian Religion, and to endeavour to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of them.

Thirdly, How happy a thing it is to eſcape and overcome the common Prejudices which Men have againſt Religion.

Firſt, How the *Poor* came to be more diſpoſed to receive the Goſpel, than others; *the Poor have the Goſpel preached unto them.* Which does not only ſignifie that our Saviour did more eſpecially apply himſelf to them, but likewiſe that they were in a nearer diſpoſition to receive it, and did of all others give the moſt ready entertainment to his Doctrine: And this our Saviour declares to us in the beginning of his Sermon upon the Mount, when he pronounceth the *Poor* bleſſed upon this account, becauſe they were

nearer

nearer to the Kingdom of God than others; *Blessed are the Poor, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.* So likewise St. *James*, Chap. 2. *v.* 5. *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?* So that it seems the *Poor* were upon some account or other in a nearer disposition to receive the Gospel, than the *Great* and *Rich* Men of this World. And of this there are three Accounts to be given.

First, The Poor had no Earthly interest to engage them to reject our Saviour and his Doctrine. The High-Priests, and Scribes, and Pharisees among the Jews, they had a plain worldly Interest which did engage them to oppose our Saviour and his Doctrine; for if he were received for the Messias, and his Doctrine embraced, they must of necessity lose their Sway and Authority among the People; and all that which rendred them so considerable, their pretended skill in the Law, and in the Traditions and Observances of their Fathers, together with their external shews of Piety and

Devotion, would signifie nothing, if our Saviour and his Doctrine should take place. And there are very few so honest and sincere, as to be content for truth's sake, to part with their Reputation and Authority, and to become less in the esteem of men than they were before. Few are so impartial as to quit those things which they have once laid great weight upon, and kept a great stir about, because this is to acknowledge that they were in an Error, and mistaken in their Zeal; which few have the ingenuity to own, tho' it be never so plain to others; and therefore it is no wonder that our Saviour's Doctrine met with so much resistance from those, who were so much concern'd in point of Honour and reputation, to make head against it. And this account our Saviour himself gives us of their Infidelity, *John* 5. 44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh of God only?* And Chap. 12. 43. *For they loved the praise of Men more than the praise of God.*

And besides the point of Reputation, those that were Rich, were concerned

cerned in point of Interest, to oppose our Saviour and his Doctrine; because he call'd upon Men *to deny themselves, and to part with Houses and Lands, yea and life it self, for his sake, and for the Gospel's*, which must needs be a very hard and unpleasant Doctrine to Rich Men, who had great Estates, and had set their Hearts upon them. Upon this Account it is that our Saviour pronounceth it so *hard for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God*; and compares it with those Things that are most difficult, and Humanly impossible; *I say unto you, it is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a Needle, than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.*

But now the *Poor* were free from these Incumbrances and Temptations; they had nothing to lose, and therefore our Saviour's Doctrine went down more easily with them; because it did not contradict their Interest, as it did the Interest of those who had great Estates and Possessions.

Secondly,

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Secondly, Another Reaſon of this is, that thoſe that are *Poor*, and enjoy little of the good things of this Life, are willing to entertain good News of Happineſs in another. Thoſe who are in a ſtate of preſent Miſery and Suffering, are glad to hear that it ſhall be well with them hereafter, and are willing to liſten to the good News of a future Happineſs; and therefore our Saviour, when he had pronounced the *Poor*, *Bleſſed*, *Luke* 6. 20. He adds by way of Oppoſition, *v.* 24. *But wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your Conſolation.* They were in ſo comfortable a Condition at preſent, that they were not much concerned what ſhould become of them hereafter; whereas all the Comfort that *Poor* Men have, is the hopes of a better Condition, *non ſi male nunc, & olim ſic erit*, that *if it be bad now, it will not be ſo always*, and therefore no wonder if the Promiſes and Aſſurance of a future Happineſs be very welcome to them.

Thirdly, If by the *Poor* we do not only underſtand thoſe who were in

in a low and mean Condition as to the Things of this World, but such likewise as had a Temper, and Disposition of Mind suitable to the Poverty of their outward Condition, which our Saviour calls *Poverty of Spirit*, by which he means *Meekness* and *Humility*, there is no doubt but that such a Frame and Temper of Spirit is a great Disposition to the receiving of Truth. And that this is included in the Notion of *Poverty*, is very plain, both from the Words of the Prophecy I cited before, *Isa.* 61. 1. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good Tidings to the meek, and to bind up the the broken-hearted*, and likewise from our Saviour's Description of these Persons, in one of the Evangelists, *Matth.* 5. 3. *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God.* So that by the *Poor*, who are so nearly disposed to receive the Gospel, our Saviour intended those, who, being in a *poor* and *low* Condition in Respect of outward Things, were likewise *meek* and *humble* in their Spirits. Now Meekness and Humility are great Dispositions

to

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to the entertaining of Truth. These Graces and Vertues do prepare the Minds of Men for Learning and Instruction; Meekness, and Modesty, and Humility are the proper Dispositions of a Scholar. He that hath a mean Opinion of himself is ready to learn of others; he who is not blinded by Pride or Passion, is more apt to consider things impartially, and to pass a truer Judgment upon them, than the Proud and the Passionate. Passion and Pride are great Obstacles to the receiving of Truth, and to our Improvement in Knowledge. Passion does not only darken the Minds of Men, but puts a false Bias upon our Judgments, which draws them off many times from Truth, and sways them that way, which our Passion enclines them. A Man of a calm and meek Temper, stands always indifferent for the receiving of Truth, and holds the Ballance of his Judgment even; but Passion sways and enclines it one way, and that commonly against Truth and Reason. So likewise Pride is a great Impediment to Knowledge, and the very worst Quality that a Learner

Learner can have; it obstructs all the Passages whereby Knowledge should enter into us, it makes Men refuse Instruction, out of a Conceit they need it not. Many Men might have known more, had it not been for the vain Opinion which they have entertained of the sufficiency of their Knowledge. This is true in all kinds of Learning, but more especially as to the Knowledge of Divine things. For God loves to communicate himself, and bestow his Grace and Wisdom upon meek and humble Minds. So the Scripture tells us, *Psa.* 25. 9. *The Meek will he guide in Judgment, and the Meek will he teach his Ways.* And 1 *Pet.* 5. 5. *Be clothed with Humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth Grace to the humble.*

And thus I have shewn in what Respects the *Poor* were more disposed for the receiving the Gospel, than others. I proceed now to the

Second Thing, namely, What those Prejudices and Objections are, which the World had against our Saviour

and

Vol. V. and his Religion at their first Appearance; as also to enquire into those which Men have at this Day against the Christian Religion, and to shew the Weakness and Unreasonableness of them. I begin,

First, With those Prejudices which the World had against our Saviour and his Religion at their first Appearance.

Both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were offended at him and his Doctrine; but not both upon the same account. They both took Exceptions at him, especially at his low and suffering Condition; but not both upon the same Reason. I shall begin with the Exceptions which the *Jews* took against our blessed Saviour and his Religion; and I shall reduce them all, or at least the most considerable of them (as I find them dispersed in the History of the Gospel, and in the *Acts* of the Apostles) to these Six Heads.

First, The Exceptions which they took against him upon account of his Extraction and Original.

Secondly,

Secondly, At the Meanness of his Condition, contrary to their Universal Expectation.

Thirdly, As to his Miracles.

Fourthly, His Conversation.

Fifthly, The Prejudice that lay against him from the Opposition that was made by Persons of greatest Knowledge and Authority among them. And,

Lastly, That the Religion, which he endeavour'd to introduce, did abolish and supersede their ancient Religion, as of no longer Use and Continuance, though it was plain it was at first instituted by God.

First, The Exceptions which they took at his Extraction and Original. In relation to this they were offended at three Things.

1. That his Original was known among them. This you find urged against him, *John* 7. 27. *We know this Man whence he is, but when the Messias*

This to be ſure was no juſt Exception in reaſon againſt him. For what if his Extraction were known, might he not be from God for all that? They owned *Moſes* for the greateſt Prophet that ever was, and yet it was very well known from whence he was.

But they ſeem to refer to ſome Prophecy of the Old Teſtament, which did ſeem to aſſert ſo much. If they meant that his Extraction ſhould be altogether unknown; they knew very well, and believed the contrary, that *he was to be of the Line of David, and to come out of Bethlehem.* If they referr'd to that Prophecy, that *a Virgin ſhould conceive and bear a Son*, and ſo underſtood that he ſhould be without Father; this was really true, tho' they thought that he was the Son of *Joſeph.* And if he affirmed that he had no Father, he did ſufficiently juſtifie it by his Miracles; that being as eaſie to be believed poſſible by a Divine Power,

as the Miracles which he wrought; which yet they could not deny, because they saw them.

2. Another Prejudice against his Extraction, was the Meanness of his Parents and Breeding. This you find mentioned, *Matth.* 13. 54, 55. *Whence hath this Man this Wisdom, and these mighty Works? Is not this the Carpenter's Son, is not his Mother called Mary, and his Brethren James and Joses and Simon and Judas? And his Sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this Man these things? And they were offended in him.* And so likewise, *John* 7. 15. *How knoweth this Man Letters, having never learned?*

A strange Prejudice and most unreasonable. They could not believe him to be an extraordinary Person, because his Parents and Relations, his Birth and Breeding were so mean. He had been brought up to a Trade, and not brought up to Learning: whereas in Reason, this ought to have been an Argument just the other way; that he was an extraordinary Person, and Divinely assisted, who

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all on the ſudden, without the help and aſſiſtance of Education, gave ſuch Evidence of his great Wiſdom and Knowledge, and did ſuch mighty Works. This could not be imputed to his Breeding, for that was mean; therefore there muſt be ſomething Extraordinary and Divine in it. Thus another Man, who had been free from Prejudice, would have reaſoned.

3. The moſt unreaſonable Prejudice of all, in reſpect of his Extraction, was grounded upon a ſpiteful and malicious Proverb, concerning the Country where our Saviour was brought up, and they ſuppoſed him to be born; and that was *Galilee*. *John* 1. 46. *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* And *John* 7. 41. *Shall the Meſſias come out of Galilee?* And v. 52. *Search and look, for out of Galilee ariſeth no Prophet.*

But it ſeems *Nathanael*, who was a good Man, was eaſily taken off from this common Prejudice, when *Philip* ſaid to him, *come and ſee.* He bids him come and ſee the Works

he

he did, and then refers it to him, whether he would believe his own Eyes, or an old Proverb. However it seems the *Jews* laid great weight upon it, as if this alone were enough to confute all his Miracles, and after they had shot this Bolt at him, the Business were concluded clearly against him. But prudent and considerate Men do not use to give much Credit to ill-natur'd Proverbs; the good or bad Characters which are given of Countreys, are not understood to be universally true, and without Exception. There is no place but hath brought forth some brave Spirits, and excellent Persons; whatever the general Temper and Disposition of the Inhabitants may be. Among the *Grecians*, the *Beotians* were esteemed a dull People, even to a Proverb; and yet *Pindar*, one of their chief Poets, was one of them. The *Scythians* were a barbarous Nation, and one would have thought no good could have come from thence; and yet that Country yielded *Anacharsis* an eminent Philosopher. The *Idumeans* were Aliens, and Strangers to the Covenant; and

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yet *Job*, one of the beſt Men that ever was, came from thence. God can raiſe up eminent Perſons from any place; *Abraham* from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, and an Idolatrous People. Nay as our Saviour tells us, *he can out of Stones raiſe up Children unto Abraham.* The wiſe God, in the Government of the World, does not tie himſelf to our fooliſh Proverbs. It is not neceſſary to make a Man a Prophet, that he ſhould be bred in a good Air. If God ſends a Man, it matters not from what Place he comes.

Secondly, Another Head of Exception againſt our Saviour, was the meanneſs of his outward Condition, ſo contrary to the Univerſal Expectation of the *Jews.* The *Jews*, from the Tradition of their Fathers, to which they, (as the Church of *Rome* does at this Day,) paid a greater Reverence, than to the written word of God, were poſſeſt with a ſtrong Perſwaſion, that the *Meſſias*, whom they expected, was to be a great Prince and Conqueror, and to ſubdue all Nations to them; ſo that nothing could be a greater defeat to their Expectations, than the mean and low

low Condition, in which our Saviour appeared; so that upon this Account they were almost universally offended at him. Vol. V.

But this Prejudice was very unreasonable. For neither did their Prophets foretel any such thing, as the Temporal Greatness of the *Messias*: But on the contrary most expressly, that *he should be despised and rejected of Men*, that *he should be a Man of Sorrows and Sufferings*, and at last *be put to death*; which was directly contrary to what they expected from their ill grounded Tradition.

Thirdly, Against his Miracles they made these two Exceptions.

1. That he wrought them by Magical Skill, and by the Power of the Devil.

Which was so exorbitantly unreasonable and malicious, that our Saviour pronounceth it to be an *unpardonable* Sin, and for Answer to it, appeals to every Man's Reason, whether it was likely *that the Devil should conspire against himself, and assist any Man to overthrow his own Kingdom*? For it was plain, our Saviour's Do-

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ctrine was directly contrary to the Devil's Deſign; and therefore to aſſiſt him to work Miracles for the Confirmation of it, muſt have been apparently againſt his own Intereſt, and to the Ruin of his own Kingdom.

2. They pretended that though he did many great Works, yet he gave them no Sign from Heaven. *Matt.* 16. 1. it is ſaid, *They deſired him to ſhew them a Sign from Heaven.* It ſeems they expected that God ſhould give ſome immediate Teſtimony to him from Heaven; as he did to *Elias*, when Fire came down from Heaven, and conſumed his Enemies; And particularly they expected, that when he was upon the Croſs, if he were the true *Meſſias*, he ſhould have come down and ſaved himſelf: And becauſe he did not anſwer their Expectation in this, they concluded him an Impoſtor.

Now what could be more unreaſonable; when he had wrought ſo many other, and great Miracles, perverſly to inſiſt upon ſome particular

particular kind of Miracle which they fancied? As if God were bound to gratifie the Curiosity of Men; and as if our Saviour were not as much *declared to be the Son of God, by rising again from the Dead*, as if he had *come down from the Cross*. Vol. V.

Fourthly, As to his Conversation, they had these three Exceptions.

1. That he used no severity in his Habit or Diet, took too much Freedom, as they thought; *came Eating and Drinking*, that is, he freely used the Creatures of God, for the end for which they were given, with Temperance and Thanksgiving; and did not lay those rigorous Restraints upon himself in these matters, which many, that were esteemed the most Religious among them, used to do.

But he plainly shews them, that this Exception was meerly out of their Prejudice against him. For if he had come in the way of Austerity, they would have rejected him as well. They were resolved to find Fault with him, whatever he did.

Vol. V. *Matth.* 11. 16. *Whereunto ſhall I liken this Generation? John the Baptiſt came neither eating nor drinking, and they ſay, He hath a Devil.* He lived in a more auſtere and melancholy way, *he came in the way of Righteouſneſs*, uſed great Strictneſs and Severity in his Habit and Diet, and this they took Exception at. Our Saviour was of a quite contrary Temper, and that did not pleaſe them neither. *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they ſay, behold, a Wine-bibber, and a Glutton.* So that let our Saviour have done what he would, he could not have carried himſelf ſo, as to have eſcaped the Cenſures of Men, ſo peeviſhly and perverſly diſpoſed.

2. That he kept Company with Publicans and Sinners.

To which Exception nothing can be more reaſonable than our Saviour's own Anſwer; that he was ſent to be *a Phyſician* to the World, *to call Sinners to Repentance*; and therefore they had no Reaſon to be angry, or think it ſtrange, if he converſed with his *Patients*, among whom his proper Imployment lay.

3. They

3. They objected to him Prophaneness in breaking the Sabbath, and that surely was plain, that *he could not be of God, if he kept not the Sabbath-day.* The Truth was he had healed one on the Sabbath-day.

To this our Saviour gives a most reasonable and satisfactory Answer, that surely *it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day*; that *that* was but a *Positive Institution*, but works of Mercy are *Natural* and *Moral* Duties; and God himself had declared, that he would have even his own *Institutions* to give way to those greater Duties, that are of *natural* and *eternal* Obligation. *I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice.* And then from the *End* of the Sabbath; The Sabbath was made for the Rest and Refreshment of Man; and therefore could not be presumed to be intended to his Prejudice. *The Sabbath was made for Man: and not Man for the Sabbath.*

Fifthly, Another great Prejudice against him, was, that Persons of the greatest

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greateſt Knowledge and Authority among them, did not embrace his Doctrine. *John* 7. 48. *Have any of the Rulers, or Phariſees believed on him?* So that here was the *infallible Rule* and *Authority* of their *Church* againſt him.

There is no doubt, but the Example and Authority of our Guides ought to ſway very much with us, and over-rule us in doubtful Caſes: but not againſt plain and convincing Evidence; there we ought to follow, *and obey God rather than Men.* There is ſometimes a viſible and palpable Corruption in thoſe who are to lead us; they may have an Intereſt to oppoſe the Truth: And thus it was with the Phariſees and Rulers at that Time: And ſo it hath been among Chriſtians in the great Degeneracy of the *Roman* Church. The Chriſtian Religion was never more endangered, nor never more corrupted, than by thoſe who have been in greateſt Authority in that Church, who ought to have underſtood Religion beſt, and have been the principal Support of it. *Men may err*: but

but *God cannot*. So that when God ſends a Prophet, or by his Word does plainly declare his Will to us, Human Example and Authority ceaſeth, and is of no force.

The *laſt* Prejudice I ſhall mention, which the *Jews* had againſt our Saviour and his Doctrine, was, that it did aboliſh and ſuperſede their Religion, as of no longer Uſe and Continuance; though it was plain it was inſtituted by God.

This had been a very ſpecious Pretence indeed, had not this been part of their Religion, and had not their own Prophets foretold, that the Meſſias ſhould come and perfect what was wanting and defective in their Inſtitution. It was expreſly ſaid in their Law, *That God would raiſe unto them another Prophet, like to Moſes, and that they ſhould hear him*, when he came. So that in Truth, it was the Accompliſhment of all thoſe Revelations which were made to the *Jews*, and did not reprove the *Jewiſh* Religion, as *falſe*; but as *imperfect*: And did not *contradict* and *overthrow*; but

Vol. V. but *perfect and fulfill the Law and the Prophets.*

And thus I have gone over the chief Exceptions and Offences which the *Jews* took at our Saviour and his Doctrine; and I hope ſufficiently ſhown the Unreaſonableneſs of them. I have not now time to proceed to what remains: But by what hath been ſaid, you may eaſily ſee, upon what ſlight and unreaſonable Grounds Men may be prejudiced againſt the beſt Perſon and Things, and yet be very confident all the while that they are in the Right. For ſo no doubt many of the *Jews*, who oppoſed our Saviour and his Doctrine, thought themſelves to be. Therefore it concerns us to put on Meekneſs and Humility and Modeſty, that we way be able to judge impartially of things, and our Minds may be preſerved free and indifferent to receive the Truths of God, when they are offer'd to us: Otherwiſe Self-Conceit and Paſſion will ſo blind our Minds, and biaſs our Judgments, that we ſhall be unable to diſcern, and unwilling to entertain the plain-

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eſt and moſt evident Truths. We ſee here by the ſad Example of the *Jews*, that by giving way to Paſſion, and cheriſhing Pride and Self-Conceit, Men may be ſo deeply prejudiced againſt the Truth, as to reſiſt the cleareſt Light, and reject even Salvation it ſelf, when it is offer'd to them. So that it is not in vain, that the Scripture ſaith, *let every Man be ſwift to hear, and ſlow to Wrath; for the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God*; and exhorts us ſo earneſtly, *to receive with Meekneſs the Word of God, which is able to ſave our Souls.*

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SERMON II.

The Prejudices againſt Chriſtianity conſider'd.

MATTH. XI. 6.

And bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.

I Have from theſe Words propounded to conſider *two* things.

I. Thoſe Prejudices and Objections which the World had againſt our Saviour and his Religion at their firſt Appearance; as alſo to enquire into thoſe which Men at this day do more eſpecially inſiſt upon, againſt the

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the Chriſtian Religion; and to ſhow the Unreaſonableneſs of them.

II. How happy a thing it is to eſcape and overcome the common Prejudices which Men have againſt Religion.

I have entred upon the *firſt* of theſe, the Prejudices which the World had againſt our Saviour and his Religion. When this great Teacher of Mankind came from God, though he gave all imaginable Teſtimony and Evidence, that he was ſent from Heaven; yet the greateſt part of the World, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were mightily offended at him, and deeply prejudiced againſt him and his Doctrine; but not both upon the ſame Account.

I have already given you an Account of the chief Exceptions which the *Jews* made againſt our Saviour and his Doctrine, and have ſhewn the Unreaſonableneſs of them.

I proceed now to conſider the principal of thoſe Exceptions, which the *Gentiles* and *Heathen* Philoſophers took

took at our Saviour and his Doctrine. I shall mention these four. Vol. V.

First, That Christianity was a great Innovation, and contrary to the received Institutions of the World.

Secondly, They objected against the Plainness and Simplicity of the Doctrine.

Thirdly, That it wanted Demonstration.

Fourthly, That the low and suffering Condition of our Saviour was unsuitable to one that pretended to be the Son of God, and to be appointed by him for a Teacher and Reformer of the World. These are the chief Exceptions which the *Heathen*, and especially their *Philosophers*, took at our Saviour and his Doctrine.

First, That the Christian Religion was a great Innovation, and contrary to the received Institutions of the World; and consequently that it did condemn the Religion, which had been so universally received and establisht in the World by so long a continuance of Time. And no wonder if this made a great Impression upon them, and raised a mighty Prejudice in the Minds of Men,

againſt the Chriſtian Religion; no Prejudices being ſo ſtrong as thoſe that are fix'd in the Minds of Men by Education; And of all the Prejudices of Education, none ſo violent and hard to be removed, as thoſe about Religion, yea though they be never ſo groundleſs and unreaſonable. *Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which yet are no Gods?* Intimating to us, that Men are very hardly brought off from that Religion, which they have been brought up in, how abſurd ſoever it be. When Chriſtianity was firſt propounded to the Heathen World, had Men been free and indifferent, and not prepoſſeſt with other Apprehenſions of God and Religion; it might then have been expected from them, that they ſhould have entertained it with a readineſs of Mind, proportionable to the Reaſonableneſs of it. But the Caſe was quite otherwiſe, the World had for many Ages been brought up to another way of Worſhip, and inur'd to Rites and Superſtitions of a quite different Nature. And this ſways very much with Men; *Sequimur majores noſtros, qui feliciter ſequuti*

sequuti sunt suos, as one of the Heathens said in those Days, *We follow our Ancestors, who happily follow'd theirs.* Men are hardly brought to condemn those Opinions and Customs in Religion, which themselves, and their Forefathers have always embraced and followed. And Wise Men especially are loth to admit so great a change in a matter of so great Concernment as Religion is. So that this must be acknowledged to have been a considerable Prejudice against the Christian Religion at its first Appearance. But yet upon a through Examination, this will not be found sufficient in Reason to withhold Men from embracing Christianity, if we consider these *four* Things.

1. No prudent Person thinks that the Example and Custom of his Forefathers obligeth him to that which is evil in it self, and pernicious to him that does it; and there is no Evil, no Danger equal to that of a false Religion; for that tends to the ruin of Men's Souls, and their undoing for ever. A Man might better alledge the Example of his Fore-

fathers to juſtifie his Errors and Follies in any other kind, than in this, which is ſo infinitely pernicious in the Conſequences of it.

2. In a great Corruption and Degeneracy, it is no ſufficient Reaſon againſt a Reformation, that it makes a Change. When Things are amiſs, it is always fit to amend and reform them; and this cannot be done without a Change. The wiſeſt among the Heathen did acknowledge, that their Religion was mixt with very great Follies and Superſtitions, and that the Lives and Manners of Men were extremely corrupt and degenerate; and they endeavour'd, as much as they could, and durſt, to reform theſe things. And therefore there was no Reaſon to oppoſe an effectual Reformation, for fear of a Change; a Change of Things for the better, though it be uſually hard to be effected, being always a thing to be deſired and wiſht for.

3. The Change which Chriſtianity deſigned, was the leaſt liable to Exception that could be, being nothing elſe in the main of it, but the reducing of Natural Religion, the bringing

bringing of Men back to such Apprehensions of God, and such a way of worshipping him, as was most suitable to the Divine Nature, and to the Natural Notions of Men's Minds; nothing else but a Design to perswade Men of the one true God Maker of the World, that he is a Spirit, and to be worshipt in such a manner, as is suitable to his Spiritual Nature. And then for matters of Practice, to bring Men to the Obedience of those Precepts of Temperance, and Justice, and Charity, which had been universally acknowledged even by the Heathens themselves to be the great Duties which Men owe to themselves and others. And that this is the main Design of the Christian Religion, the Apostle hath told us in most plain and express Words, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12. *The Grace of God* (that is, the Doctrine of the Gospel) *which hath appeared to all Men, and brings Salvation, teacheth us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World.*

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And all that the Chriſtian Religion adds beyond this, is means and helps for our Direction, and Aſſiſtance, and Encouragement in the Diſcharge and Performance of theſe Duties. For our Direction God hath ſent his Son in our Nature, to declare his Will to us, and to be a Pattern and Example of Holineſs and Virtue. For our Aſſiſtance he hath promiſed the Aids of his Holy Spirit; and for our Encouragement, he offers to us Pardon of Sin in the Blood of his Son, and Eternal Life and Happineſs in another World. This is a ſhort Sum aud Abridgment of the Chriſtian Religion, and there is nothing of all this that can reaſonably be excepted againſt.

4. God, conſidering the Prejudice of the Heathen againſt Chriſtianity by reaſon of their Education in a contrary Religion, was ſtrong and violent, was pleaſed to give ſuch Evidence of the Truth of Chriſtianity, as was of proportionable Strength and Force to remove and conquer this Prejudice. He was pleaſed to give Teſtimony to the firſt Founder of this Religion by mighty Miracles

cles, and particularly by his Resurrection from the Dead: But because the Report of these things was only brought to the Heathen World, and they had not seen these things themselves; therefore he enabled those who were the Witnesses of these Things to the World, to work as great Miracles as he had done. And when they saw those who gave Testimony to our Saviour's Miracles, do as great and strange things themselves, as they testified of him, there was no Reason any longer to doubt of the Truth of their Testimony. So that though the Prejudice of the Heathen against Christianity was very great, yet the Evidence which God gave to it, was strong enough to remove it. The Doctrine of Christianity was such as might have recommended it self to impartial Men, by its own Reasonableness: But meeting with violent Prejudices in those, to whom it was offer'd, God was pleased to give such a Confirmation to it, as was sufficient to bear down those Prejudices. Vol. V.

Secondly, Another Objection against Christianity, was the Plainness and

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Simplicity of the Doctrine. They expected ſome deep Speculations in Natural or Moral Philoſophy; they made full Account, a Teacher ſent from Heaven would have inſtructed them in the profoundeſt Points, and diſcourſed to them about the firſt Principles of things, and the Nature of the Soul, and the chief end of Man, with a Subtilty and Eloquence infinitely beyond that of their greateſt Sophiſters, and able to bear down all Oppoſition and Contradiction: But inſtead of this, they are told a plain Story of the Life and Miracles of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and of his dying upon the Croſs, and riſing from the Dead, and aſcending into Heaven; and a few plain Precepts of Life; and all this deliver'd without any Ornaments of Art, or Inſinuation of Eloquence, to gain the Favour and Applauſe of thoſe to whom they related theſe Things.

But now, this truly conſidered, is ſo far from being any real Objection againſt the Chriſtian Doctrine, that it is one of the greateſt Commendations that can be given of it: For matter of Fact ought to be related

lated in the moſt plain, and ſimple, and unaffected manner; and the leſs Art and Eloquence is uſed in the telling of a Story, the more likely it is to gain Belief. And as for our Saviour's Precepts, how plain ſoever they might be, I am ſure they are a Collection of the moſt excellent and reaſonable Rules of a good Life, and the freeſt from all Vanity and Folly, that are to be met with in any Book in the World. And can any thing be more worthy of God, and more likely to proceed from him, than ſo plain and uſeful a Doctrine as this? The Language of Law is not wont to be fine and perſwaſive, but ſhort, and plain, and full of Authority. Thus it is among Men: And ſurely it is much fitter for God to ſpeak thus to Men, than for Men to one another.

Thirdly, It is objected, that the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apoſtles wanted Demonſtration; they ſeemed to impoſe too much upon the Underſtandings of Men, and to deliver things too Magiſterially, not demonſtrating Things from Intrinſical

ſical Arguments, but requiring Belief and Aſſent without Proof.

This the Apoſtle St. *Paul* readily acknowledgeth, that in preaching the Goſpel to the World, they did not proceed in the way of the Heathen Orators and Philoſophers, 1 *Cor.* 4. 4. *My Speech and my Preaching was not in the enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom: but in Demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power*; that is, they did not go in the way of Human Eloquence and Demonſtration: but yet their Doctrine did not want its Evidence and Demonſtration, though of another kind. They did not go about to bewitch Men by Eloquence, nor to entangle their Minds by ſubtil Reaſonings, the Force of which very few are capable of: But they offer'd to Men a ſenſible Proof and Demonſtration of the Truth of what they delivered, in thoſe ſtrange and miraculous Operations, to which they were enabled by the Holy Ghoſt. And this was a ſenſible Evidence, even to the meaneſt Capacity, of a Divine Aſſiſtance going along with them, and giving Teſtimony to them. I appeal to any Man, whether the Reſur-

Reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt* from the Dead, and his Aſcending into Heaven, be not a clearer Demonſtration of another Life after this, and more level to the Capacities of all Mankind, than the fineſt and ſubtileſt Arguments that can be drawn from the immaterial Nature of the Soul, its power of Reflection upon it ſelf, and Independency upon the Body as to ſome of its Operations; which yet are ſome of the chiefeſt Arguments that Philoſophy affords, to prove the Immortality of our Souls. Vol. V.

Fourthly, The *Heathens* objected, that the low and mean Condition of our Saviour, was unſuitable to one who pretended to be the Son of God, and to be appointed by God to be a Teacher and Reformer of the World. This to the *Heathen Philoſophers* did not only appear unreaſonable, but even ridiculous. So St. *Paul* tells us, 1 *Cor.* 1. 23. *We preach Chriſt crucified, to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks Fooliſhneſs.* To think that a Man, who appeared in ſuch mean Circumſtances, ſhould be fit to reform the World; and one, who himſelf was put to Death, ſhould be

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relyed upon for Life and Immortality. This Objection I have heretofore conſidered at large, and therefore ſhall now ſpeak but very briefly to it.

Beſides thoſe excellent Reaſons and Ends which the Scripture aſſigns of our Saviour's Humiliation; as that he might be a Teacher and Example to us; that he might make Expiation for our Sins; that by ſuffering himſelf, he might learn to commiſerate us; that *by Death he might deſtroy him that had the Power of Death, that is the Devil, and might deliver thoſe, who through fear of Death were all their lives ſubject to Bondage*; I ſay, beſides theſe, it was of great uſe that he ſhould live in ſo mean and afflicted a Condition, to confront the Pride, and Vanity, and Fantaſtry of the World; and to convince Men of theſe two great Truths, that God may love thoſe whom he afflicts, and that Men may be innocent, and virtuous, and contented in the midſt of Poverty, and Reproach, and Suffering. Had our Bleſſed Saviour been a great Temporal Prince, his Influence and Example might poſſibly have made more

more Hypocrites and ſervile Converts; but would not have perſwaded Men one jot more to be inwardly good and virtuous. The great Arguments which muſt do that, muſt be fetched, not from the Pomp and Proſperity of this World, but from the Eternal Happineſs and Miſery of the other. Beſides had he appeared in any great Power and Splendor, the Chriſtian Religion could not have been ſo clearly acquitted from the Suſpicion of a worldly Intereſt and Deſign, which would have been a far greater Objection againſt it, than this which I am now ſpeaking to.

Add to all this, that the wiſeſt of the *Heathen Philoſophers* did teach, that Worldly Greatneſs and Power are not to be admired, but deſpiſed by a truly wiſe Man; that Men may be virtuous, and good, and dearly beloved of God, and yet be liable to great Miſeries and Sufferings; and that whoever ſuffers unjuſtly, and bears it patiently, gives the greateſt Teſtimony to Goodneſs, and does moſt effectually recommend Virtue to the World; that a good Man under the hardeſt Circumſtances of Miſe-

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ry, and Reproach, and Suffering, is the fitteſt Perſon of all other to be the Miniſter, and Apoſtle, and Preacher of God to Mankind. And ſurely they who ſay ſuch things (which the *Heathen* have done) had no reaſon to object to our bleſſed Saviour his low and ſuffering Condition.

As to that part of the Objection, that he who promis'd Immortality to others could not ſave himſelf from Death and Suffering; conſidering, that he who was put to Death, reſcu'd himſelf from the Power of the Grave, it is ſo far from being ridiculous, that nothing can be more reaſonable, than to rely upon him for our hopes of Immortality, who by riſing from the Grave, and conquering Death, gave a plain demonſtration that he was able to make good what he promiſed.

I have done with the Exceptions which were made againſt our Saviour and his Doctrine at their firſt Appearance in the World. I proceed in the

II. Place to conſider the Prejudices and Objections which Men at this day do more eſpecially inſiſt upon, againſt our Saviour and his Religion: And they are many.

Firſt,

Firſt, Some that relate to the Incarnation of our Saviour.

Secondly, To the Time of his Appearance.

Thirdly, That we have not now ſufficient Evidence of the Truth of Chriſtianity; the main Arguments for it relying upon Matters of Fact, of which, at this diſtance, we have not, nor can expect to have ſufficient Aſſurance.

Fourthly, That the Terms of it ſeem very hard, and to lay too great Reſtraints upon Human Nature.

Fifthly, That it is apt to diſpirit Men, and to break the Vigour and Courage of their Minds.

Sixthly, The Diviſions and Factions that are among Chriſtians.

Seventhly, The wicked Lives of the greateſt part of the Profeſſors of Chriſtianty. In anſwer to all which, I do not propoſe to ſay all that may be ſaid; but as briefly as I can to offer ſo much, as may, if not give full Satisfaction, yet be ſufficient to break the Force of them, and to free the Minds of Men from any great Perplexity about them.

As to the *Firſt*, which relates to the

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the Incarnation of our Saviour; and the *Second* to the Time of his Appearance; I know that these and most of the rest I have mention'd, were urged by the Heathen against Christianity: But they are now more especially insisted upon both by the secret and open Enemies of our Religion.

The Objections against his Incarnation I have elsewhere consider'd. And therefore shall proceed to the next, *viz.*

John 1.14. *Serm.* III.

Secondly, As to the Time of our Saviour's Appearance, it is objected, If he be the only Way and Means of Salvation, why did he come no sooner into the World; but suffer Mankind so long without any Hopes or Means of being saved? This was objected by *Porphyry* of old, and still sticks in the Minds of Men. To this I answer,

1. It is not fit for Creatures to call their Creator to too strict an Account of his Actions. Goodness is free, and may act when and how it pleaseth; and *as God will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy*, so he may have Mercy at what Time he pleaseth, and is not bound to give us an

an Account of his Matters. This is much like the Objection of the Atheist against the Being of God; That if there were such an Infinite and Eternal Being, he would surely have made the World sooner, and not have been without all Employment for so long a duration: Such another Objection is this against our Saviour, That if he had been the Son of God, he would have begun this great and merciful Work of the Redemption of Mankind sooner, and not have delay'd it so long, and suffer'd Mankind to perish for four Thousand Years together.

But it seems in the one as well as the other, God took his own time, and he best knew what time was fittest. The Scripture tells us, That *in the fulness of Time, God sent his Son*; when things were ripe for it, and all Things accomplisht that God thought requisite in order to it. In judging of the Actions of our Earthly Governours, those who are at a distance from their Councils, what Conjectures soever they may make of the Reasons of them, will nevertheless, if they have that Respect for their Wisdom which they ought, believe, that how strange soever some of

their Actions may ſeem, yet they were done upon good Reaſon, and that they themſelves, if they knew the Secrets of their Counſels, ſhould think ſo. Much more do we owe that Reverence to the infinite Wiſdom of God, to believe that the Counſels of his Will are grounded upon very good Reaſon, tho' we do not ſee many Times what it is.

2. It is not true that the World was wholly deſtitute of a Way and Means of Salvation before our Saviour's coming. Before the Law of *Moſes* was given, Men were capable of being received to the Mercy and Favour of God, upon their Obedience to the Law of Nature, and their ſincere Repentance for the Violation of it, by virtue of *the Lamb that was ſlain from the Foundation of the World.* Men were ſaved by Chriſt both before and under the Law, without any particular and expreſs Knowledge of him. There were Good Men in other Nations, as well as among the *Jews*; as *Job*, and his Friends alſo, ſeem to have been. In all Ages of the World, and *in every Nation, they that feared God, and wrought Righteouſneſs were accepted of him.*

him. The Sacrifice of Christ, which is the Meritorious Cause of the Salvation of Mankind, looks back as well as forward; and God was reconcileable to Men, and their Sins were pardon'd, by Virtue of this great Propitiation that was to be made. In which Sense perhaps it is, that Christ is said to be *the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World. Heb.* 9. 25, 26, the Apostle intimates to us, that if this Sacrifice which was offer'd in the last Ages of the World, had not been available in former Ages, *Christ must have often suffer'd since the Foundation of the World: but now hath he appeared once in the Conclusion of the Ages, to put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself.*

3. He did appear at that Time, in which the World stood most in need of him; when the whole World, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were sunk into the greatest Degeneracy both in Opinion and Practice, and the Condition of Mankind seemed to be even desperate and past Remedy. This was the needful time, when it was most seasonable for this great Physician to come, and show his Pity and Skill in our Recovery. God

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could have ſent his Son many Ages before: but he thought fit to try other ways firſt, and to reſerve this powerful Remedy to the laſt; *laſt of all he ſent his Son.*

4. The Time of our Saviour's Appearing was of all Ages of the World the fitteſt Seaſon for his Coming; Whether we conſider,

1. That the World was at that Time beſt prepared and diſpoſed for receiving the Chriſtian Religion: Or,

2. That this was the fitteſt Seaſon that ever had been, for the eaſie diffuſing and propagating of this Religion. I aſſign theſe Reaſons as tending to give Men ſome Satisfaction, why this great Bleſſing was delay'd ſo long; it being rather an Argument of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, than of the want of either, to defer Things to that time, in which they are moſt likely to have their effect. Not but that perhaps other and better Reaſons may be given. To be ſure God had very good Reaſons for this Diſpenſation, whether we can hit upon them or not. In the mean Time theſe

theſe ſeem not to be altogether inconſiderable. Vol. V.

1. That the World was at that time beſt prepared and diſpoſed for receiving the Chriſtian Religion. All the while our Saviour's Coming was delay'd, God's Providence was diſpoſing things for it, and training up Mankind for the entertaining of this great Bleſſing. The *Jewiſh* Religion was always very burdenſom, but much more ſo, towards the Expiration of the *Jewiſh* State, partly by the Intolerable Multitude of external Obſervances, which were daily multiplyed upon them, under Pretence of Traditions from their Fathers; and partly by reaſon of their Subjection to the *Romans*, which made the Exerciſe of their Religion in many Reſpects more difficult.

And the Heathen World was in a very good Meaſure prepared for Chriſtianity, by being civilized. About the time of our Saviour's coming into the World, Philoſophy and Learning had been ſo diffuſed by the *Roman* Conqueſts, as had brought a great part of the World from Barbariſm to Civility. Beſides

Vol. V. that their Philoſophy had this Effect upon Men, to refine their Reaſon, and in a good Degree to detect the Follies of the Heathen Idolatry and Superſtition.

'Tis true indeed Learning and Philoſophy flouriſht a great while before in the Time of the *Grecian* Empire, and perhaps before that in ſome other Nations; and the Conqueſts of the *Grecians* were very ſpeedy and of vaſt Extent: But yet they were neither ſo Univerſal, nor ſo well ſettled; nor did they propagate their Philoſophy and Civility together with their Conqueſts, as the *Romans* did. So that there was no Age of the World, wherein Mankind were ſo generally prepared and diſpoſed for the receiving of the Goſpel, as that wherein our Saviour appeared.

2. This was likewiſe the fitteſt Seaſon for the eaſie diffuſing and propagating of the Chriſtian Religion. The *Romans*, together with their Conqueſts, did very much propagate their Language, which made the ways of Communication far more eaſie; And by the long and frequent Correſpondence of the ſeveral Parts of

of that Empire one with another, the ways of Travel and Paſſage from one Country to another were more ready and open. So that no Age can be inſtanc'd, in all Reſpects ſo convenient for the ſpeedy propagating of a new Religion, as that wherein our Saviour appear'd, *viz.* when the *Roman* Empire was at its height. And it was very agreeable to the Goodneſs and Wiſdom of the Divine Providence, that the braveſt and moſt virtuous People in the World (infinitely beyond either the *Perſians* or *Gretians*) ſhould be choſen by God, as one of the chiefeſt Means for the ſpreading of the beſt and moſt perfect Revelation that ever God made to the World.

Thirdly, It is objected, that we have not now ſufficient Evidence of the Truth of Chriſtianity, the main Arguments for it relying upon matters of Fact, of which, at this Diſtance, we have not, nor can be ſuppos'd to have, ſufficient Aſſurance. To this I anſwer,

1. That Men not only may have, but have an undoubted Aſſurance of matters of Fact, ancienter than theſe

Vol. V. we are ſpeaking of; and the diſtance of them from our Times creates no manner of Scruple in the Minds of Men concerning them. That there was ſuch a Man as *Alexander* the Great, and that he conquer'd *Darius* and the *Perſians*; That *Julius Cæſar* invaded our Nation, and in ſome meaſure ſubdued it; and that he overcame *Pompey* in the Battel of *Pharſalia*; and innumerable other Things, which I might inſtance in, that were done before our Saviour's Time, are firmly believed without any manner of Doubt and Scruple by Mankind, notwithſtanding they were done ſo long ago. So that ancient matters of Fact are capable of clear Evidence, and we may have ſufficient Aſſurance of them. And where there is equal Evidence, if we do not give equal Belief, the fault is not in the Argument; but in the Paſſion or Prejudice of thoſe, to whom it is propoſed.

2. We have every whit as great Aſſurance, (nay greater, if it can, or needed to be) of the matters upon which the proof of Chriſtianity relies, as of thoſe which

I have mentioned. The matters of Fact, upon which the Truth of Chriſtianity relies, are, that there was ſuch a Perſon as *Jeſus Chriſt*; that he wrought ſuch Miracles; that he was put to death at *Jeruſalem* under *Pontius Pilate*; that he roſe again from the dead, and was viſibly taken up into Heaven; that he beſtowed miraculous Gifts and Powers upon the Apoſtles, to make them competent Witneſſes of his Reſurrection, and of the Truth of that Doctrine which they publiſht in his Name; that accordingly they preached the Goſpel to the World, and in a ſhort ſpace, without any Human Advantages, did propagate it, and gain Entertainment for it, in moſt parts of the then known World. Vol. V.

Now theſe matters of Fact have the ſame Teſtimony of Hiſtories, wrote in thoſe Times, and conveyed down to us, by as general and uncontrol-ed a Tradition, as the Conqueſts of *Alexander*, and *Julius Cæſar*. So that if we do not afford equal Belief to them, it is a ſign that we have ſome Prejudice or Intereſt againſt the one, more than againſt the other, though

the

Vol. V. the Evidence for both be equal. Nay I go further, that the Evidence for these things which are the Foundation of Christianity, is so much the greater, because that which depended upon it, was of far greater Concernment to the World, and consequently Mankind were more obliged to search more narrowly into it.

For our Saviour's Life, and Death, and Resurrection, we have the Testimony of a great number of Eye-witnesses, who have wrote the History of these things. And though they were truly extraordinary Persons, and gave Testimony to themselves by Miracles; yet at present I desire no more, but that they be looked upon, as knowing and honest Relators of what they heard and saw; and that the same Credit be given to them, which we give to *Livy*, and *Arian*, and *Q. Curtius*, for plain Events, and matters of Fact.

But yet I must add withal, that besides the Miracles which they wrought, they gave greater Testimony of their Integrity, than any Histo-

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Historian in the World ever did. For they willingly suffer'd the greatest Persecution and Torment, yea and Death it self, in Confirmation of the Truth of what they deliver'd. And for the propagating of the Christian Religion through so great a part of the World, it is evident by the Effect beyond all Denyal.

So that for the matters of Fact, upon which the Truth of Christianity does depend, here is greater, and more advantagious Evidence of History, than for any other Matter of equal Antiquity whatsoever.

3. As to the substance of these matters of Fact, we have the concurring Testimony of the greatest Enemies of the Christian Religion. That there were such Persons as our Saviour and his Apostles, that they preached such a Doctrine, that they wrought such Miracles; for this we have the Acknowledgment of the *Jews*, and the Testimony of the Heathen Historians, and particularly of *Celsus*, and *Porphyry*, and *Julian*, who were the particular and most learned Adversaries of the Christian Religion. So that as to the

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the Matters of Fact, there is no Objection againſt them, whatever uſe we may make of them, or whatever Conſequences we may draw from them. And I preſume it agreed by all Objectors, that if theſe matters of Fact be true, they are a ſufficient Foundation of the Truth of our Religion, and we are very unequal to our Religion, if we make a doubt of theſe things, which the greateſt Enemies of Chriſtianity never had the Face to deny.

4. And beſides all this, to recompence the Diſadvantage which we have of thoſe who ſaw the Miracles of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, we have the *Teſtimonium rei*, the Evidence of the Effects of theſe things to confirm our Belief of them; and this is an Advantage, which the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity could not have. We ſee our Saviour's Predictions of the Succeſs of his Religion in the World, in the propagating and eſtabliſhing of it, fully accompliſht, notwithſtanding the fierce Oppoſition and Reſiſtance that was made againſt it by the greateſt Powers of the World. We ſee the Diſperſion of the *Jews* in all Nations, and the Miſery

Miſery and Contempt which they every where ſuffer; and that now for above Sixteen Hundred Years, they have continued a diſtinct People, and a Spectacle of the Divine Juſtice and Severity, for rejecting and crucifying the Son of God, and for a laſting and ſtanding Teſtimony of the Truth of our Saviour's Prediction, and of the Chriſtian Religion. Vol. V.

So that though we live at this diſtance from the firſt riſe and beginning of Chriſtianity; yet we have the Relation of thoſe Things, which give Confirmation to it, conveyed down to us in as credible a manner, as any ancient matter of Fact ever was; and the Effects of things remaining to this day, do give Teſtimony to the Truth of it.

Fourthly, It is objected, that the terms of Chriſtianity ſeem very hard, and to lay too great Reſtraints upon Human Nature. It commands us to mortifie our Luſts, and ſubdue our Paſſions, and *deny Ungodlineſs, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World; to be holy in all manner of Converſation; to*

have

Vol. V. *have respect to whatever things are honest, and true, and just, and virtuous, and of good report; and to deny our selves*; and to part with the dearest Enjoyments of this Life, *yea and with Life it self, for the sake of Christ, and his Gospel.* Now these seem to be very hard Terms, to forego all the present Pleasures and Enjoyments of this Life, in hopes of a future Happiness which we are less assur'd of.

To this I answer,

1. That this is a greater Objection against Religion in general, than the Christian Religion. For Natural Religion requires of us all the main Duties that Christianity does, and gives us far less Assurance of the Reward of our Obedience. Natural Religion requires Piety, and Justice, and Charity, the due Government of our Appetites and Passions, as well as Christianity does; but does not discover to us the Rewards of another World, by many Degrees so clearly, as our Lord and Saviour, who hath *brought Life and Immortality to Light by the Gospel*, and by his Resurrection from the Dead, and Ascen-

Ascension into Heaven, hath given us full Assurance of another Life after this, and of a glorious Immortality. So that tho' we have not, nor can have the Evidence of Sense, for a Future State, yet we have all the Rational Evidence for it, that can be wisht or expected; and much more than Men have for those Adventures of their Lives and Fortunes, which they frequently make in this World, and think themselves reasonable in so doing.

2. The Restraints which Christianity lays upon Men, are in the judgment of Mankind so far from being an Objection against it, that they are highly to the Commendation of it. Nay it were the greatest Objection that could be against our Religion, if it did set us at Liberty from those Restraints. What can be more to the credit of any Religion, than to command Men to be just, and charitable, and peaceable? And what more to the Advantage of the Professors of it? And on the contrary, what can reflect more upon any Religion, than to indulge and allow Men in any Vice contrary to these?

It

Vol. V. It ſhews Men are glad to make any thing an Objection againſt Chriſtianity, when they lay hold of that, which, if it had been otherwiſe, they would have made ten times more Clamour againſt it for the contrary.

3. As for moſt of thoſe Reſtraints which Chriſtianity lays upon us, they are of that Nature, ſo much both for our Private and Publick Advantage, that ſetting aſide all Conſiderations of Religion, and of the Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life, they are really good for us, and if God had not laid them upon us, we ought in Reaſon, in order to our Temporal Benefit and Advantage to have laid them upon our ſelves. If there were no Religion, I know Men would not have ſuch ſtrong and forcible Obligations to theſe Duties; but yet I ſay, though there were no Religion, it were good for Men, in order to Temporal Ends, to their Health, and Quiet, and Reputation, and Safety, and, in a word, to the private and publick Proſperity of Mankind, that Men ſhould be temperate, and chaſt,

and

and juſt, and peaceable, and charitable, and kind, and obliging to one another, rather than the contrary. So that Religion does not create thoſe Reſtraints arbitrarily, but requires thoſe things of us, which our Reaſon and a Regard to our own Advantage, which the Neceſſity and Conveniency of the Things themſelves, without any Conſideration of Religion, would in moſt Caſes urge us to. Vol. V.

4. As to the caſe of Perſecution for Religion; beſides that it does not now happen ſo frequently, as it did in the beginning of Chriſtianity, nay very ſeldom in compariſon, if all things be conſider'd it cannot be thought unreaſonable; both becauſe Religion offers to us, in Conſideration of our preſent Sufferings, a Happineſs unſpeakably greater than that which we forego for the ſake of Religion; and becauſe when it happens, God does extraordinarily enable Men to go through it with Courage and Comfort, as we ſee in the Examples of the primitive Chriſtians; who in great Numbers of all Tempers and Ages, did voluntarily chuſe to give up themſelves

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to these Sufferings, when there was no necessity laid upon them, but fair terms of Retreat were offer'd to them by their Enemies. It is one thing, when a Man suffers by the Law, and cannot help it; and another thing when Men may avoid Suffering. In the former Case Men submit to necessity, and bear it as well as they can; in the latter Case, if Men suffer, it is a Sign they firmly believe the Reward of it; and if they suffer chearfully, and with Joy, as most of the Martyrs did, it is a plain Evidence that God affords them extraordinary Support in their Sufferings; and then the Case is not very hard, when Religion puts them upon nothing, but what it gives them cause, and enables them to rejoyce in the doing of it.

Fifthly, It is objected, that the Christian Religion is apt to dispirit Men, and to break the Courage and Vigour of their Minds, by the Precepts of Patience, and Humility, and Meekness, and of forgiving Injuries, and the like. This Objection hath made a great Noise in the World, and hath been urged by Men of

great

great Reputation, and a deep insight into the Tempers of Men, and the Affairs of the World. It is said to be particularly insisted upon by *Machiavel*, and very likely it may; tho' I think that elsewhere he is pleased to speak with Terms of Respect, not only of Religion in general, but likewise of the Christian Religion; and (which seems very much to contradict the other,) he says in the first Book of his Discourses upon *Livy* (Ch. 11.) That the greatness and Success of *Rome* is chiefly to be ascribed to their Piety and Religion, and that *Rome* was more indebted to *Numa Pompilius*, for settling Religion among them, than to *Romulus* the Founder of their State; and the Reason he gives is much to our present Purpose; For says he, without Religion there can be no Military Discipline, Religion being the Foundation of good Laws and good Discipline. And particularly he commends the *Samnites*, who betook themselves to Religion, as their last and best Remedy to make Men courageous, nothing being more apt to raise Men's Spirits than Religion.

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But howſoever this Objection be, I dare appeal both to Reaſon and Experience for the Confutation of it.

1. To Reaſon, and that as to theſe *two* things.

(1.) That the Chriſtian Religion is apt to plant in the Minds of Men Principles of the greateſt Reſolution and trueſt Courage. It teacheth Men upon the beſt and moſt rational Grounds to deſpiſe Dangers, yea and Death it ſelf, the greateſt and moſt formidable Evil in this World; and this Principle is likely to inſpire Men with the greateſt Courage; for what need he fear any thing in this World, who fears not Death, after which there is nothing in this World to be feared? And this the Chriſtian Religion does, by giving Men the aſſurance of another Life, and a Happineſs infinitely greater than any is to be enjoyed in this World. And in order to the ſecuring of this Happineſs, it teacheth Men to be holy, and juſt, and to exerciſe a good Conſcience both toward God and Man, which is the only way to free a Man from all inward and tormenting

menting Fears of what may happen to him after Death. *This makes the righteous Man* to be (as *Solomon* ſays) *bold as a Lion.* Nothing renders a Man more undaunted as to Death, and the Conſequences of it, than the Peace of his own Mind; for a Man not to be conſcious to himſelf of having wilfully diſpleaſed him, who alone can make us happy or miſerable in the other World. So that a good Man, being ſecure of the Favour of God, may upon that Account reaſonably hope for a greater Happineſs after Death than other Men: Whereas a bad Man, if he be ſober, and have his Senſes awakned to a ſerious Conſideration of things, cannot but be afraid to die, and be extremely anxious and ſolicitous what will become of him in another World. And ſurely it would make the ſtouteſt Man breathing afraid to venture upon Death, when he ſees Hell beyond it. Poſſibly there may be ſome Monſters of Men, who may have ſo far ſuppreſt the Senſe of Religion, and ſtupified their Conſciences, as in a good Meaſure to have conquer'd the fears of

Vol. V. Death, and of the Conſequences of it. But this happens but to a very few, as the Poet tells us in the Perſon of an *Epicurean.*

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoſcere cauſas,
Atque metus omnes & inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus, ſtrepitumq; Acherontis avari.

There are very few that attain to this Temper, and but at ſome times. So that if Vice and Wickedneſs do generally break the Firmneſs of Men's Spirits; it remains, that nothing but Religion can generally give Men Courage againſt Death. And this the Chriſtian Religion does eminently to thoſe who live according to it; our bleſſed Saviour having delivered us from the fear of Death, by conquering Death for us, and giving us Aſſurance of the glorious Rewards of another Life.

(2.) Meekneſs, and Patience, and Humility, and Modeſty, and ſuch Virtues of Chriſtianity, do not in Reaſon tend to diſpirit Men, and break their true Courage, but only to

to regulate it, and take away the Fierceneſs and Brutiſhneſs of it. This we ſee in Experience, that Men of the trueſt Courage, have many times leaſt of Pride and Inſolence, of Paſſion and Fierceneſs. Thoſe who are better bred, are commonly of more gentle and civil Diſpoſitions: But yet they do not therefore want true Courage, though they have not the Roughneſs and Foolhardineſs of Men of ruder Breeding. So in a true Chriſtian, Courage and Greatneſs of Mind is very conſiſtent with Meekneſs, and Patience, and Humility. Not that all good Men are very couragious; there is much of this in the Natural Tempers of Men, which Religion does not quite alter. But that which I am concerned to maintain is, that Chriſtianity is no hindrance to Mens Courage; and that *cæteris paribus*, ſuppoſing Men of equal Tempers, no Man hath ſo much Reaſon to be valiant, as he that hath a good Conſcience; I do not mean a bluſtering, and boiſterous, and raſh Courage; but a ſober, and calm, and fixt Valour.

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2. I appeal to Experience for the Truth of this. Did ever greater Courage and Contempt of Death appear in all Ages, and Sexes, and Conditions of Men, than in the primitive Martyrs? Were any of the *Heathen* Souldiers comparable to the Chriſtian *Legion*, for Reſolution and Courage, even the *Heathens* themſelves being Judges? The Religion of *Mahomet* ſeems to be contrived to inſpire Men with Fierceneſs and Deſperateneſs of Reſolution, and yet I do not find, but that generally where there hath been any equality for Number, the Chriſtians have been ſuperiour to them in Valour, and have given greater Inſtances of Reſolution and Courage, than the *Turks* have done. So that I wonder upon what Grounds this Objection hath been taken up againſt Chriſtianity, when there is nothing either in the Nature of this Religon, or from the Experience of the World, to give any tolerable Countenance to it. And ſurely the beſt way to know what Effect any Religion is likely to have

have upon the Minds of Men, is to conſider what Effects it hath had in the conſtant Experience of Mankind. There remains the other two Objections, which I mention'd, but I muſt reſerve them to another Opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON III.

The Prejudices againſt *Jeſus* and his Religion conſider'd.

MATTH. XI. 6.

And bleſſed is he, whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.

FROM theſe Words I propoſed to conſider theſe *Two* Things.

I. The Prejudices and Objections which the World at firſt had, and many ſtill have againſt our Bleſſed Saviour and his Religion.

II. That it is a great Happineſs to eſcape the common Prejudices which Men are apt to entertain againſt Religion.

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I have conſidered thoſe Objections which the *Jews* and *Heathen Philoſophers* made againſt our Saviour and his Religion: And,

II. Thoſe which at this Day are inſiſted upon by the ſecret and open Enemies of our Religion. And I mentioned *ſeven*, the *two* laſt of which I ſhall now ſpeak to.

Sixthly, It is objected, That there are many Diviſions and Factions among Chriſtians. This I confeſs is a great Reproach and Scandal to our Religion: but no ſufficient Argument againſt it. And,

1. To leſſen and abate the Force of this Objection, it is to be conſider'd, that a very great part of the Diviſions that are among thoſe that are call'd Chriſtians, are about things that do not concern the Eſſentials of Chriſtianity, and therefore they are no Argument that Chriſtianity is not true, becauſe they bring no Suſpicion of Doubt and Uncertainty upon the Fundamentals of Chriſtianity which all agree in, though they differ in other things. 'Tis true indeed they are very undecent, and contrary to the Nature and Precepts of the

Chriſtian

Chriſtian Religion, which above any Religion in the World, does ſtrictly require Love and Unity. They take off much from the Strength and Beauty of our Religion: but do by no means deſtroy the Truth of it. Vol. V.

2. How many and great ſoever they may be, yet they can with no Colour of Reaſon be imputed to the Chriſtian Religion, as giving any Cauſe and Encouragement to them, however by Accident it may be the Occaſion of them. For no Man doubts but that the beſt thing in the World may be perverted by bad Men, and made an Occaſion of a great deal of Miſchief in the World, and yet be very innocent of all that Miſchief. No Man can deny but that Chriſtianity does ſtrictly enjoyn Love, and Peace, and Unity among all the Members of that Profeſſion; and ſo far as Chriſtians are factious and unpeaceable, ſo far they are no Chriſtians. So that a Man may as well except againſt Philoſophy, becauſe of the Differences that were among the Philoſophers, and ſay there was no Truth among them, becauſe they were not all agreed in

all

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all Things; as call the Truth of Christianity in question, for the differences that are among Christians. Nay a Man might every whit as well except against Laws and Government; because, notwithstanding them, there are frequent Seditions and Rebellions, infinite Suits and Controversies occasion'd even by the very Laws: But no Man was ever so unreasonable as to think this a good Reason against Laws and Government.

3. The Divisions of Christians are so far from being an Argument against Christianity, that on the contrary, they are an Argument that Men should embrace Christianity more heartily, and make more Conscience of obeying the Precepts of it. And if they did this, the greatest part of those Contentions and uncharitable Animosities which are among them would presently cease. If the Christian Religion were truly entertained, and Men did seriously mind the Precepts of it, and give up themselves to the Obedience of its Laws, Differences would not be easily commenced, nor so vehemently prosecuted,

ted, nor so pertinaciously continued in, as they are. Men would not, upon every slight Reason, and little doubt and Scruple, rend and tear the Body of Christ in pieces, and separate themselves from the Communion of the Church they live in, and in which they were baptized and received their Christianity. Vol. V.

If Men seriously consider'd, and truly understood what they do, when they divide the Church of Christ upon little Scruples and Pretences, they would hardly be able to think themselves Christians, whilst they continued in these unchristian and uncharitable Practices.

If Men would but be, or do what Christianity requires, there would be no occasion for this Objection; and if Men will not, Christian Religion is not to be blamed for it, but those that act so contrary to the plain Precepts and Directions of it. I proceed to the,

Seventh and *last* Objection, The vicious and wicked Lives of a great part of the Professors of Christianity. This is a heavy Objection indeed, and such an one, that tho' we may justly

juſtly be aſhamed to own the Truth of it, yet can we not have the face to deny it. 'Tis ſo ſad a Truth, that it is enough to confound us, and to fill all our Faces with Shame and Bluſhing: But yet it is an Objection not ſo ſtrong againſt Chriſtianity, as it is ſhameful to Chriſtians. And notwithſtanding the utmoſt Force of it, we have no cauſe to be aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt; but the Goſpel of Chriſt may juſtly be aſhamed of us. For whatever we be, *The Goſpel of Chriſt is the power of God unto Salvation.* The Natural Tendency of it is to reform and ſave Men, and *the wrath of God is therein revealed againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men, however they may detain the Truths of God in Unrighteouſneſs*, and not ſuffer them to have their due and proper Influence upon their Hearts and Lives.

But that I may give a more clear and particular Anſwer to it, I deſire you to attend to theſe following Conſiderations.

1. It cannot be denyed, but that Chriſtianity hath had once very great and marvellous Effects upon the Hearts

Hearts and Lives of Men. And for this, I appeal to the Lives and Manners of the Primitive Chriſtians, for which we have not only the Teſtimony of our own Books and Writers, but even of the Adverſaries of our Religion. What Reformation Chriſtianity at firſt wrought in the Manners of Men, we have clear and full Teſtimony, from what the Apoſtles wrote concerning the ſeveral Churches which they planted in ſeveral Parts of the World. What hearty Unity and Affection there was among Chriſtians, even to that Degree, as to make Men bring in their private Eſtates and Poſſeſſions for the common Support of their Brethren, we may read in the Hiſtory of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles. The City of *Corinth*, by the Account which *Strabo* gives of it, was a very vicious and luxurious place, as moſt in the World; and yet we ſee by St. *Paul*, what a ſtrange Reformation the Chriſtian Religion made in the Lives and Manners of many of them: 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, 10, 11. *Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor idolaters, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous,*

tous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God. And ſuch were ſome of you: But ye are waſhed, but ye are ſanctified, but ye are juſtified, in the Name of the Lord Jeſus, and by the Spirit of our God. And ſurely it is no ſmall matter to reclaim Men from ſuch a profligate courſe of Life. The Apoſtle inſtanceth in Crimes and Vices of the firſt Rate, from which yet he tells us many were cleanſed and purified *by the Name of the Lord Jeſus, and the Spirit of God*; that is, by the Power and Efficacy of the Chriſtian Doctrine, together with the Co-operation of Gods Holy Spirit.

After the Apoſtles, the Ancient Fathers, in their Apologies for Chriſtianity, give us a large Account of the great Power and Efficacy of the Chriſtian Doctrine upon the Lives and Manners of Men. *Tertullian* tells the *Roman* Governours, that their Priſons were full of Malefactors, committed for ſeveral Crimes; but they were all *Heathens*. *De veſtris ſemper æſtuat carcer*, *Their Priſons were thronged with Criminals of their*

their own Religion: But there were no Chriſtians to be found committed there for ſuch Crimes; *Nemo illic Chriſtianus, niſi hoc tantùm*, &c. *There were no Chriſtians in their Priſons, but only upon account of their Religion.* Or if there were any Malefactors that had been Chriſtians, they left their Religion when they fell into thoſe Enormities. And afterwards he adds, that if Chriſtians were irregular in their Lives, they were no longer accounted Chriſtians, but were baniſht from their Communion as unworthy of it. And they appealed to the *Heathens*, what a ſudden and ſtrange change Chriſtianity had made in ſeveral of the moſt lewd, and vicious, and debauched Perſons, and what a viſible Reformation there preſently appeared in the Lives of the worſt Men, after they had once entertained the Chriſtian Doctrine.

And theſe Teſtimonies are ſo much the ſtronger, becauſe they are Publick Appeals to our Adverſaries, which it is not likely, they who were ſo perſecuted and hated as the Chriſtians were, would have had the

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Confidence to have made, if they had not been notoriouſly true, even their Enemies themſelves being Judges.

And that they were ſo, we have the Confeſſion of the *Heathen* themſelves. I ſhall produce two remarkable Teſtimonies to this Purpoſe, and one of them from the Pen of one of the bittereſt Enemies that the Chriſtian Religion ever had.

Pliny, in his Epiſtle to *Trajan* the Emperour, gives him an Account, "That having examined the Chriſtians, "ſetting aſide the Superſtition of their "way, he could find no Fault; and "that this was the Sum of their Er-"rour, that they were wont to meet "before Day, and ſing a Hymn to "Chriſt, and to bind themſelves by "a Solemn Oath or Sacrament, not "to any wicked Purpoſe; but not to "ſteal, nor rob, nor commit Adulte-"ry, nor break their Faith, nor de-"tain the Pledge. So that it ſeems the Sum of their Errour was, to oblige themſelves in the ſtricteſt manner againſt the greateſt Vices and Crimes. Which methinks is a great Teſtimony from an Enemy and a Judge,

Judge, one who would have been ready to diſcover their Faults, and had Opportunity of enquiring into them.

My other Witneſs is *Julian* the Emperour and Apoſtate, who in one of his Epiſtles tells us, "The Chriſti-"ans did ſeverely puniſh Sedition and "Impiety. And afterwards exhorting the *Heathen* Prieſts to all Offices of Humanity, and eſpecially Alms towards the Poor; he tells them, they ought to be more careful in this particular, and to mend this Fault; *Becauſe* (ſays he) *the Galileans taking advantage of our Neglect in this kind, have very much ſtrengthned their Impiety* (for ſo he calls their Religion) *by being very intent upon theſe Offices, and exemplary in their Charity to the Poor, whereby they gained many over to them.*

And in his 49*th* Epiſt. to *Arſacius* the High-Prieſt of *Galatia*, he recommends to him, among other Means for the Advancement of Paganiſm, the building of Hoſpitals, and great Liberality to the Poor, not only of their own Religion, but others. *For*, ſays he,

Vol. V. *it is a Shame that the impious Galileans ſhould not only maintain their own poor, but ours alſo; wherefore let us not ſuffer them to out-do us in this Virtue.* Nothing but the force of Truth could have extorted ſo full an Acknowledgment of the great Humanity and Charity of the Chriſtians, from ſo bitter an Enemy of our Religion as *Julian* was. If he owned it, we may be ſure it was very great and exemplary.

So that you ſee that the Chriſtian Religion had a very great Power and Efficacy upon the Lives and Manners of Men, when it firſt appeared in the World. And the true Spirit and Genius of any Religion, the Force of any Inſtitution is beſt ſeen in the primitive Effects of it; before it be weakned and diſpirited by thoſe Corruptions, which in time are apt to inſinuate themſelves into the beſt things. For all Laws and Inſtitutions are commonly more vigorous, and have greater Effects at firſt, than afterwards; and the beſt things are apt in time to degenerate and to contract Soil and Ruſt. And it cannot in Reaſon be expected otherwiſe.

therwiſe. So that though it be a thing to be bewailed, and by the greateſt Care and Diligence to be reſiſted, yet it is not ſo extremely to be wonder'd at, if Chriſtianity, in the ſpace of Sixteen Hundred Years, hath abated much of its firſt Strength and Vigour.

Eſpecially conſidering, that there were ſeveral Circumſtances, that gave Chriſtianity mighty Advantages at firſt, eſpecially the miraculous Powers which did accompany the firſt Publication of the Goſpel; which muſt needs be full of Conviction to thoſe who ſaw the wonderful Effects of it: The extraordinary Operation of the Spirit of God upon the Minds of Men, to diſpoſe them to the receiving of it: The perſecuted and ſuffering State that Chriſtians were generally in, which made thoſe who embraced the Profeſſion, to be generally ſerious and in good earneſt in it, and kept up a continual Heat and Zeal in the Minds of Men for that Religion which coſt them ſo dear, and for which they ſuffer'd ſo much: And the fury of their Enemies againſt it,

did naturally inflame their Love and Kindneſs to one another; nothing being a greater Endearment among Men, than common Sufferings in a common Cauſe. So long as Chriſtians were not corrupted by Secular Intereſts; and by denying all for Chriſt, were free from Covetouſneſs and Ambition, the great roots of all Evil, The Church of Chriſt, *though ſhe was black, yet ſhe was comely, and terrible, as an Army with Banners*; She was all this while in an excellent Poſture to reſiſt the Temptations, and fight againſt the Vices and Corruptions of the World: But after the World broke in upon the Church, and Chriſtianity was countenanced by the Powers of the World, and water'd with Secular Preferments and Encouragements, no wonder if the *Tares* began to grow up with the *Wheat*; Then *Iniquity began to abound, and the Love of many to grow cold*. When the Sun of Proſperity began to ſhine upon the Chriſtian Profeſſion, then no wonder if the Vermin bred and ſwarmed every where. When it grew creditable and advantagious for Men to be Chriſtians,

ans, this muſt in all Reaſon make a World of Hypocrites, and counterfeit Profeſſors. Vol. V.

Theſe things, I reckon, muſt in Reaſon make a mighty Difference between the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, and thoſe which have follow'd ſince; and no wonder, if the real Fruits and Effects of Religion in theſe ſeveral States of Chriſtianity be very unequal. For Proſperity and Adverſity made a wide difference in this Matter. The Perſecution of any Religion naturally makes the Profeſſors of it real; and the Proſperity of it does as naturally allure and draw in Hypocrites. Beſides that even the beſt of Men are more corrupted by Proſperity, than Affliction.

But though Chriſtians were beſt under Perſecution, yet God did not think fit always to continue them in that State, becauſe he would not tempt them, and tire them out with perpetual Sufferings; and after he had given the World a ſufficient Experiment of the Power and Efficacy of the Chriſtian Religion, in maintaining and propagating it ſelf in deſpite of all the Violence and Oppoſition

Vol. V. Oppoſition of the World, ſufficient for ever to give Reputation to it; he then thought good to leave it to be kept up by more Human Ways, and ſuch as offer leſs violence to the Nature of a Man. Being once eſtabliſht and ſettled in the World, and upon equal Terms of Advantage with other Religions, God left it to be ſupported by more ordinary Means; by pious Education, and diligent Inſtruction, and good Laws and Government, without Miracles, and without Perſecution, and without thoſe extraordinary and overpowring Communications of his Grace and Spirit which he afforded to the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity.

I have inſiſted the longer upon this, that Men may ſee what Effects Chriſtianity hath had upon the Lives of Men, by which we may ſee the proper Nature and Efficacy of it; and withal may not wonder ſo much that it hath not the ſame Effects now. Though it be matter of great Shame to us, that they are ſo vaſtly diſproportionable to what they were at firſt.

2. Tho'

2. Tho' the Diſproportion be very great between the Effects of Chriſtianity at firſt, and what it hath now upon the Lives of Men; yet we ought not to deny, but it hath ſtill ſome good Effects upon Mankind; and it is our great Shame and Fault that it hath no better. If we will ſpeak juſtly of things, as to the general civility of Life and Manners, Freedom from Tyranny, and Barbarouſneſs, and Cruelty, and ſome other enormous Vices, yea and as to the exemplary Piety and Virtue of great Numbers of particular Perſons of ſeveral Nations, there is no Compariſon between the general State of *Chriſtendom*, and the *Pagan* and *Mahometan* parts of the World. Next to Chriſtianity, and the Law of *Moſes*, (which was confined to one Nation) Philoſophy was the moſt likely Inſtrument to reform Mankind that hath been in the World; and it had very conſiderable Effects upon ſome particular Perſons, both as to the rectifying of their Opinions, and the reforming of their Lives: But upon the generality of Mankind it did very little

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little in either of theſe Reſpects, eſpecially as to the rectifying of the abſurd and impious Opinions of the People concerning God, and their ſuperſtitious Worſhip of the Deity. Whereas the Chriſtian Religion did univerſally, where-ever it came, ſet Men free from thoſe groſs Impieties and Superſtitions, and taught Men to worſhip the only true God in a right Manner.

Tho' we muſt confeſs, to the Eternal Reproach of the Chriſtian Religion, that the *Weſtern* Church hath degenerated ſo far, that it ſeems to be in a great Meaſure relapſt into the Ignorance and Superſtition of Paganiſm; out of which Degeneracy, that God hath reſcued us, as we have infinite Cauſe to adore his Goodneſs, ſo we have all the reaſon in the World to dread and deteſt a Return into this ſpiritual *Egypt*, this Houſe of Darkneſs and Bondage, and the bringing of our Necks again under *that Yoke, which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear.*

So that you ſee that there are ſtill very conſiderable Effects of the Chriſtian Religion in the World,

yea

yea and I doubt not but in thoſe places where it is moſt corrupted and degenerated; becauſe they ſtill retain the eſſential Doctrines of Chriſtianity, which have not quite loſt their Force, notwithſtanding the many Errours and Corruptions that are mixt with them. And as God knows, and every Man ſees it, that the generality of Chriſtians are very bad, notwithſtanding all the Influence of that excellent Religion which they profeſs; yet I think it is very evident, Men would be much worſe without it. For though very many who have entertained the Principles of Chriſtianity are very wicked in their Lives; yet many are otherwiſe: And thoſe that are bad have this Advantage by their Religion, that it is in its Nature apt to reduce and recover Men from a wicked Courſe, and ſometimes does: whereas the caſe of thoſe Perſons would have been deſperate, were it not for thoſe Principles of Religion which were implanted in them by Chriſtian Education, and though they were long ſuppreſt, yet did at laſt awaken them to a Conſideration of their Condi-

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Condition, and proved the happy Means of their Recovery.

3. I will not deny but there are ſome Perſons as bad, nay perhaps worſe, that have been bred up in the Chriſtian Religion, than are commonly to be found in the Darkneſs of Paganiſm; for the Corruption of the beſt Things is the worſt, and thoſe who have reſiſted ſo great a Light as that of the Goſpel is, are like to prove the moſt deſperately wicked of all other. There is nothing that Men make worſe uſe of than of Light and Liberty, two of the beſt and moſt pleaſant Things in the World. Knowledge is many times abuſed to the worſt Purpoſes, and Liberty into Licentiouſneſs and Sedition: and yet no Man for all that thinks Ignorance deſirable, or would wiſh a perpetual Night and Darkneſs to the World; and conclude from the Inconveniencies of abuſed Liberty, that the beſt State of things would be, that the generality of Mankind ſhould be all Slaves to a few, and be perpetually chained to the Oar, or condemned to the Mines.

There

There are many times as bad Conſequences of good things, as of bad: but yet there is a great difference between good and bad for all that. As Knowledge and Liberty, ſo likewiſe the Chriſtian Religion is a great Happineſs to the World in general, though ſome are ſo unhappy as to be the worſe for it; not becauſe Religion is bad, but becauſe they are ſo.

4. If Religion be a matter of Mens free Choice, it is not to be expected that it ſhould neceſſarily and conſtantly have its Effect upon Men; for it works upon us, not by way of Force or natural Neceſſity, but of Moral Perſwaſion. If Religion, and the Grace of God which goes along with it, did force Men to be good and virtuous, and no Man could be ſo unleſs he were thus violently forc'd, then it would be no Virtue in any Man to be good, nor any Crime and Fault to be otherwiſe. For then the Reaſon why ſome Men were good, would be becauſe they could not help it; and others bad, becauſe the Grace of God did not make

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make them ſo whether they would or not.

But Religion does not thus work upon Men. It directs Men to their Duty by the ſhorteſt and plaineſt Precepts of a good Life; it perſwades Men to the Obedience of theſe Precepts, by the Promiſes of Eternal Happineſs, and the Threatnings of Eternal Miſery in caſe of obſtinate Diſobedience; it offers us the Aſſiſtance of Gods Holy Spirit, to help our Weakneſs, and enable us to that, for which *we are not ſufficient of our ſelves*: But there is nothing of Violence or Neceſſity in all this. After all, Men may diſobey theſe Precepts, and not be perſwaded by theſe Arguments, may not make uſe of this Grace which God offers, may *quench and reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt*, and *reject the Counſel of God againſt themſelves*. And the Caſe being thus, it is no wonder, if the Temptations of this preſent World prevail upon the vicious Inclinations of Men againſt their Duty, and their true Intereſt; and conſequently if the Motives and Arguments of the Chriſtian Religion have not a conſtant and certain

Effect

Effect upon a great part of Mankind. Not but that Chriſtianity is apt to bring Men to Goodneſs; but ſome are ſo obſtinately bad, as not to be wrought upon by the moſt powerful Conſiderations it can offer to them.

5. It cannot be denyed, but that Chriſtianity is as well framed to make Men good, as any Religion can be imagined to be; and therefore where-ever the Fault be, it cannot be in the Chriſtian Religion, that we are not good. So that the bad Lives of Chriſtians are no ſufficient Objection either againſt the Truth or Goodneſs of the Chriſtian Doctrine. Beſides the Confirmation that was given to it by Miracles, the Excellency of the Doctrine, and its proper Tendency to make Men holy and virtuous, are a plain Evidence of its Divine and Heavenly Original. And ſurely the Goodneſs of any Religion conſiſts in the ſufficiency of its Precepts, to direct Men to their Duty; in the force of its Arguments to perſwade Men to it; and the ſuitableneſs of its Aids and Helps to enable us to the Diſ-

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charge and Performance of it. And all theſe Advantages the Chriſtian Religion hath above any Religion or Inſtitution that ever was in the World. The reaſonable and plain Rules of a good Life are no where ſo perfectly collected, as in the Diſcourſes of our Bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles. No Religion ever gave Men ſo full Aſſurance of the mighty Rewards and Puniſhments of another World; nor ſuch gracious Promiſes of Divine Aſſiſtance, and ſuch Evidence of it, eſpecially in the Piety, and Virtue, and Patience, and Self-denyal of the Primitive Chriſtians, as the Doctrine of God our Saviour hath done, *which teacheth Men to deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World, in contemplation of the bleſſed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie to himſelf a peculiar People zealous of good Works.*

6. and *laſtly*, After all that hath or can be ſaid, it muſt be acknowledged, and ought ſadly to be lamented

mented by us, that the wicked Lives of Chriſtians are a marvellous Scandal and Reproach to our Holy Religion, and a great Obſtacle to the ſpreading of it in the World, and a real Objection againſt it to prejudiced Perſons, with whom it doth juſtly bring into doubt the Goodneſs and Efficacy of the Inſtitution it ſelf, to ſee how little Effect it hath upon the Hearts and Lives of Men. It is hard for a Man to maintain the Reputation of an excellent Maſter in any kind, when all the World ſees, that moſt of his Scholars prove Dunces. Whatever Commendation may be given to any Art or Science, Men will queſtion the Truth and Reality of it, when they ſee the greateſt part of thoſe who profeſs it, not able to do any thing anſwerable to it. The Chriſtian Religion pretends to be an Art of ſerving God more decently and devoutly, and of living better than other Men: but if it be ſo, why do not the Profeſſors of this excellent Religion ſhew the Force and Virtue of it in their Lives? And though I have ſufficiently ſhewn,

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that this is not enough to overthrow the Truth, and diſparage the Excellency of the Chriſtian Doctrine; yet it will certainly go a great way with prejudiced Perſons, and it cannot be expected otherwiſe.

So that we have infinite Reaſon to be aſhamed, that there is ſo plain a contrariety between the Laws of Chriſtianity, and the Lives of the greateſt part of Chriſtians; ſo notorious and palpable a difference between the Religion that is in the Bible, and that which is to be ſeen and read in the Converſations of Men.

Who that looks upon the Manners of the preſent Age, could believe, if he did not know it, that the holy and pure Doctrine of the Chriſtian Religion, had ever been ſo much as heard, much leſs pretended to be entertained and believed among us? Nay among thoſe who ſeem to make a more ſerious Profeſſion of Religion, when we conſider how ſtrangely they allow themſelves in Malice and Envy, in Paſſion, and Anger, and Uncharitable Cenſures, and evil Speaking, in fierce Conten-

Contentions and Animoſities; who would believe that the great Inſtrument of theſe Mens Religion, I mean the Holy Bible, by which they profeſs to regulate and govern their Lives, were full of plain and ſtrict Precepts of Love and Kindneſs, of Charity and Peace, and did a hundred times with all imaginable Severity, and under pain of forfeiting the Kingdom of God, forbid Malice and Envy, and Revenge, and evil ſpeaking, and raſh and uncharitable Cenſures, and tell us ſo plainly that the Chriſtian Religion obligeth Men *to put off all theſe*; and that *if any Man ſeem to be religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, that Man's Religion is vain?* Do Men read and hear theſe Things every day, and profeſs to believe them to be the Truths of God, and yet live as if they were verily perſwaded they were falſe? What can we conclude from hence, but either that this is not Chriſtianity, or the greateſt part of us are no Chriſtians?

So that if one of the Apoſtles or Primitive Chriſtians ſhould riſe from

Vol. V. the Dead, and converſe among us, how would he wonder to ſee the Face and Complexion of Chriſtianity alter'd from what it was in their Days; and were it not for the Name and Title which we bear, would ſooner gueſs us to be any thing than Chriſtians.

So that upon the whole Matter, there is no Way to quit our ſelves of this Objection, and to waſh away the Reproach of it, but to mend and reform our Lives. 'Till this be done, it is unavoidable, but the vicious Manners of Men will affect our Religion with Obloquy and Reproach, and derive an ill Conceit and Opinion of it into the Minds of Men. And I cannot ſee how Chriſtianity can ever gain much ground in the World, 'till it be better adorned and recommended by the Profeſſors of it. Nay we have juſt cauſe to fear, that if God do not raiſe up ſome great and eminent Inſtruments to awaken the World out of this ſtupid Lethargy, that Chriſtianity will every Day decline, and the World will in a ſhort Space be overrun

overrun with Atheiſm and Infidelity. For Vice, and Superſtition, and Enthuſiaſm, which are the reigning Diſeaſes of Chriſtendom, when they have run their Courſe, and finiſht their Circle, do all naturally end, and meet in Atheiſm. And then it will be time for the great Judge of the World to appear, and effectually to convince Men of that, which they would not be perſwaded to believe by any other Means. And of this our Saviour hath given us a terrible and fearful Intimation, in that Queſtion of his; *When the Son of Man comes, ſhall he find Faith upon Earth?* Our Saviour hath not poſitively affirmed it, and God grant that we may not make it, and find it true.

And thus I have, by God's Aſſiſtance, given the beſt Satisfaction I could, to the moſt material Exceptions I have met with againſt our bleſſed Saviour and his Religion. The

II. Thing remains briefly to be ſpoken to, *viz.* How happy a Thing it is to eſcape the common Prejudi-

ces which Men are apt to entertain againſt Religion, *Bleſſed is he, whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.* And this will appear if we conſider theſe *Three* or *Four* Things.

Firſt, That Prejudice does many times ſway and biaſs Men againſt the plaineſt and cleareſt Truths. We ſee in daily Experience, what a falſe Byaſs Prejudice puts upon Mens Underſtandings. Men that are educated in the groſſeſt Errors and Superſtitions, how hard it is to convince them that they are in a wrong Way! and with what Difficulty are they perſwaded of their Miſtake! Nay they have hardly the Patience to be told they are in an Error, much leſs to conſider what may be offer'd againſt it. How do the Paſſions and Luſts of Men blind them and lead them aſide from the Truth, and encline them to that ſide of the Queſtion, which is moſt favourable to their Luſts and Intereſts? How partially do Men lean to that part which makes moſt for their Advantage, though all the Reaſon in the World lye on the other ſide?

Now

Now Ignorance and Miſtake are a great Slavery of the Underſtanding, if there were no worſe Conſequences of our Errors: and therefore our Saviour ſays excellently, that the Truth makes Men free; *Ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you free.*

Secondly, Prejudice does not only byaſs Men againſt the plaineſt Truths, but in Matters of greateſt Concernment, in things that concern the Honour of God, and the Good of others, and our own Welfare and Happineſs. Prejudices againſt Religion occaſion Miſtakes of the higheſt Nature, and may lead Men to Superſtition and Idolatry, and to all manner of Impiety, nay many times to Atheiſm and Infidelity. The Prejudices againſt the Doctrine of our Saviour are of another Concernment, than the Prejudices which Men have againſt the Writers of Natural Philoſophy or Eloquence, or any other Human Art or Science. If a Man's Prejudice make him err in theſe Matters, the Thing is of no great Moment: but the buſineſs of Religion

gion is a matter of the greateſt and weightieſt Concernment to Mankind.

Thirdly, The Conſequence of Mens Prejudices in theſe things prove many times fatal and deſtructive to them. Men may upon unreaſonable Prejudices *reject the Counſel of God againſt themſelves*; as it is ſaid of the *Chief Prieſts* and *Phariſees* among the *Jews*. Men may oppoſe the Truth ſo obſtinately and perverſly, as to be *Fighters againſt God*, and to bring certain Ruin and *ſwift Deſtruction upon themſelves*, both in this World, and the other; as the *Jews* did, who by oppoſing the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and perſecuting our Saviour and his Diſciples, *fill'd up the meaſure of their Sins, 'till Wrath came upon them to the uttermoſt*. It is eaſie to entertain Prejudices againſt Religion, and by conſidering only the wrong ſide of things, to fortifie our Prejudices to ſuch a Degree, and entrench our ſelves ſo ſtrongly in our Errors, that the plaineſt and moſt convincing Truths ſhall not be able to have any Acceſs to us, or make any Impreſſion upon us: but all this while

while we do in truth undermine our own Happineſs, and are ſecretly working our own Ruin; and while we think we are oppoſing an Enemy, we are deſtroying our ſelves; *for who hath harden'd himſelf againſt God* and his Truth, *and proſpered?* The Principles of Religion are a firm and immoveable Rock, againſt which the more violently we daſh our ſelves, the more miſerably we ſhall be ſplit and ſhatter'd. Our Bleſſed Saviour and his Religion, have been to many, and are to this day *a Stone of ſtumbling, and a Rock of Offence*; but he himſelf hath told us what ſhall be the Fate of thoſe who are offended at him; *Whoſoever ſhall fall on this Stone, ſhall be broken; but upon whomſoever it ſhall fall, it ſhall grind him to Powder.* And therefore well might he ſay here in the Text, *bleſſed is he whoſoever ſhall not be offended in me.*

Fourthly, There are but few in compariſon, who have the Happineſs to eſcape and overcome the common Prejudices which Men are apt to entertain againſt Religion. Thus to be ſure it was, when Chriſtianity firſt appeared

appeared in the World: And tho' among us the great Prejudice of Education be removed; yet there are ſtill many, who upon one Account or other, are prejudiced againſt Religion, at leaſt ſo far, as not to yield to the Power of it in their Lives. Few Men are ſo impartial in conſidering things, as not to be ſwayed by the Intereſt of their Luſts and Paſſions, as to keep the Ballance of their Judgments even, and to ſuffer nothing but Truth and Reaſon to weigh with them. We generally pretend to be *Pilgrims and Strangers in the World*, and to be all travelling towards Heaven: but few of us have the Indifferency of Travellers; who are not concern'd to find out the faireſt and the eaſieſt Way, but to know which is the right Way, and to go in it. Thus it ſhould be with us, our End ſhould always be in our Eye, and we ſhould chuſe our way only with Reſpect to that; not conſidering our Inclination ſo much as our Deſign; nor chuſing thoſe Principles for the Government of our Lives, which are moſt agreeable to our preſent Deſires, but thoſe which

which will moſt certainly bring us to Happineſs at the laſt; and that I am ſure the Principles of the Chriſtian Religion, firmly believed and practiſed by us, will do. Vol. V.

Let us then be perſwaded by all that hath been ſaid upon this Argument, to a firm Belief of the Chriſtian Doctrine. I hope you are in ſome Meaſure ſatisfied, that the Objections againſt it are not ſuch, as ought much to move a wiſe and conſiderate Man. If we believe that God hath taken ſo much care of Mankind, as to make any certain Revelation of his Will to them, and of the way to Eternal Happineſs; let us next conſider, whether any Religion in the World can come in Competition with the Chriſtian, and with half that Reaſon pretend to be from God, that Chriſtianity is able to produce for it ſelf, whether we conſider the Things to be believed, or the Duties to be practiſed, or the Motives and Arguments to the Practice of thoſe Duties, or the Divine Confirmation that is given to the whole. And

if

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if we be thus perſwaded concerning it, let us reſolve to live up to the Laws and Rules of this Holy Religion. Our belief of it ſignifies nothing, without the Fruits and Effects of a Good Life. And if this were once reſolved upon, the Difficulty of believing would ceaſe; for the true Reaſon why Men are unwilling to believe the Truths of the Goſpel, is becauſe they are loth to put them in Practice. *Every one that doth Evil, hateth the Light.* The true Ground of moſt Mens Prejudice againſt the Chriſtian Doctrine, is becauſe they have no mind to obey it; and when all is done, the great Objection that lies at the bottom of Mens Minds againſt it, is, that it is an Enemy to their Luſts, and they cannot profeſs to believe it without condemning themſelves, for not complying with it in their Lives and Practice.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

Jesus, the Son of God, prov'd by his Resurrection.

ROM. I. 4.

And declared to be the Son of God, with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the dead.

ST. *Paul* in the beginning of this Epistle (according to his Custom in the rest) stiles himself an Apostle, particularly call'd, and set apart by God, for the preaching of the Gospel; the main Subject whereof was, *Jesus Christ our Lord*; Who as he was, according to his Divine

Vol. V. Divine Nature, *the eternal Son of God*; so according to his Humane Nature, he was not only *the Son of Man*, but also *the Son of God*. *According to the Flesh* (that is the Weakness, and Frailty, and Mortality of his Humane Nature) *he was the Son of David*, that is, of his Posterity by his Mother, who was of that House and Line. *Made of the seed of David, according to the Flesh*, v. 3. *But according to the Spirit, of Holiness*; (that is, in regard of that Divine Power of the Holy Ghost, which was manifested in him, especially in his Resurrection from the Dead,) *he was demonstrated to be the Son of God*; even according to his Humane Nature; *Declared to be the Son of God, with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the dead.*

All the Difficulty in the Words, is concerning the meaning of this Phrase; of Christ's being *declared to be the Son of God*: The word is ὁρισθέντος, which most frequently in Scripture does signifie *predestinated, decreed, determined*; but it likewise signifies, that which is *de-*

fined,

fined, declared, demonſtrated, put out of all Doubt and Controverſie. And in this Senſe our Tranſlation renders it. As if the Apoſtle had ſaid, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, tho' according to the Frailty and Weakneſs of his Humane Nature, he was of the Seed of *David*; yet in reſpect of that Divine Power of the Holy Ghoſt, which manifeſted it ſelf in him, eſpecially in his Reſurrection from the Dead, he was *declared to be the Son of God, with Power*, that is, mightily, powerfully demonſtrated to be ſo; ſo as to put the matter out of all Diſpute and Controverſie.

And therefore following our own Tranſlation, I ſhall handle the Words in this Senſe, as containing this Propoſition in them: *That the Reſurrection of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt from the Dead, by the Holy Ghoſt, is a powerful demonſtration that he was the Son of God.*

And it will conduce very much to the clearing of this Propoſition to conſider theſe *Two* things.

First, upon what Account Christ as Man, is said to be *the Son of God.*

Secondly, In what Sense he is said to be *declared to be the Son of God by his Resurrection from the Dead.* The Consideration of these *Two* Particulars will fully clear this Proposition, and the Apostles Meaning in it.

First, Upon what Account Christ as Man, is said to be *the Son of God.* And for our right Apprehension of this Matter, it is very well worthy our Observation, that Christ as Man, is no where in Scripture said to be *the Son of God*, but with relation to the Divine Power of the Holy Ghost, some way or other eminently manifested in him; I say the Divine Power of the Holy Ghost as the Lord and Giver of Life, as he is call'd in the Ancient Creeds of the Christian Church. For as Men are naturally said to be the Children of those from whom they receive their Life and Being; so Christ, as Man, is said to be *the Son of God*, because he had Life communicated to him from the Father, by an immediate

Power

Power of the Spirit of God, or the Holy Ghoſt. Firſt at his Conception, which was by the Holy Ghoſt. The Conception of our Bleſſed Saviour was an immediate Act of the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, overſhadowing, as the Scripture expreſſeth it, the bleſſed Mother of our Lord: And then at his Reſurrection, when after his Death, he was, by the Operation of the Holy Ghoſt, raiſed to Life again.

Now upon theſe two Accounts only, Chriſt as Man, is ſaid in Scripture to be *the Son of God.* He was really ſo upon Account of his Conception; but this was ſecret and inviſible: but moſt eminently and remarkably ſo, upon account of his Reſurrection, which was open and viſible to all.

1. Upon Account of his Conception by the Power of the Holy Ghoſt. That upon this Account he was called *the Son of God*, St. *Luke* moſt expreſly tells us, *Luke* 1. 35. where the Angel tells the Virgin *Mary*, that *the Holy Ghoſt ſhould come upon her, and the Power of the Higheſt ſhould overſhadow her, and therefore*

Vol. V. *that Holy Thing, which should be bor of her, should be call'd the Son* God. And this our Saviour mean *by the Father's sanctifying him, an sending him into the World*; For whic Reason he says he might justly ca himself *the Son of God*, John 10. 3 36. *If he call them Gods, unto who the word of God came, and the Scri ture cannot be broken: Say ye of hi whom the Father hath sanctified, a sent into the World, Thou blasphem because I said I am the Son of Go* If there had been no other Reaso this had been sufficient to have g ven him the Title of *the Son* God, that he was brought into t World by the Sanctification, or D vine Power of the Holy Ghost.

2. Christ is also said in Scriptu to be *the Son of God*, and to *declared* to be so upon Account *his Resurrection from the Dead*, b the Power of the Holy Ghost. H Resurrection from the Dead, is he in the Text ascribed to *the Spirit Holiness*, or the Holy Ghost. And in other places of Scripture, *Rom.* 11. *If the Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the Dead, dwell in yo*

And

And, 1 Pet. 3. 18. *Being put to Death in the Fleſh: but quickned by the Spirit*; that is, he ſuffer'd in that frail mortal Nature which he aſſumed; but was raiſed again by the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, of the Spirit of God which reſided in him. And upon this Account he is expreſly ſaid in Scripture to be *the Son of God. Pſa.* 2. 7. *I will declare the decree; The Lord hath ſaid unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*; to which perhaps the Apoſtle alludes here in the Text, when he ſays that *Chriſt was decreed to be the Son of God, by his Reſurrection from the Dead.* To be ſure theſe Words, *this day have I begotten thee*, St. *Paul* expreſly tells us were accompliſht in the Reſurrection of Chriſt; as if God by raiſing him from the Dead, had *begotten* him, and *decreed* him to be *his Son. Acts* 13. 32, 33. *And we declare unto you glad Tidings, how that the Promiſe which was made unto the Fathers, God hath fulfilled the ſame unto their Children, in that he hath raiſed up Jeſus again, as it is alſo written in the ſecond Pſalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

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He was *the Son of God* before as he was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt; but this was ſecret and inviſible, and known only to the Mother of our Lord: And therefore God thought fit to give a public and viſible demonſtration of it, ſo as to put the matter out of all queſtion, he declared him in a powerful manner to be his Son, by giving him a new Life after Death by raiſing him from the Dead; and by this new and eminent Teſtimony given to him, declared him again to be his Son, and confirmed the Title which was given him before upon a true, but more ſecret Account, of his being conceived by the Holy Ghoſt.

And as our Saviour is ſaid to be *the Son of God* upon this twofold Account, of his Conception by the Holy Ghoſt, and his Reſurrection to Life by the Spirit of God: So the Scripture (which does ſolicitouſly purſue a Reſemblance and Conformity between Chriſt and Chriſtians) does likewiſe upon a twofold Account (anſwerable to our Saviour's Birth and Reſurrection) call true Believers and

Chriſtians

Chriſtians, *the Children of God*; *viz.* Upon Account of their Regeneration or new Birth, by the Operation of the Spirit of God; and upon Account of their Reſurrection to Eternal Life, by the Power of the ſame Spirit. Vol. V.

Upon account of our Regeneration and becoming Chriſtians by the Power and Operation of the Holy Spirit of God upon our Minds, we are ſaid to be the Children of God, as being regenerated and born again by the Holy Spirit of God. And this is our firſt Adoption. And for this Reaſon, the Spirit of God conferred upon Chriſtians at their Baptiſm, and dwelling and reſiding in them afterwards, is call'd *the Spirit of Adoption*; Rom. 8. 15. *Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby you cry, Abba Father.* And *Gal.* 4. 5, 6. Believers are ſaid *to receive the Adoption of Sons*; *God having ſent forth the Spirit of his Son into their Hearts, crying Abba Father*; That is, all Chriſtians, for as much as they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, may with Confidence call

Vol. V. God Father, and look upon themselves as his Children. So the Apostle tells us, *Rom.* 8. 14. *That as many as are led (or acted) by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God.*

But though we are said to be Children of God upon account of our Regeneration, and the Holy Spirit of God dwelling and residing in Christians; yet we are eminently so, upon account of our Resurrection to Eternal Life, by the mighty Power of God's Spirit. This is our final Adoption, and the Consummation of it; and therefore *Rom.* 8. 21. this is called *the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God*, because by this we are for ever *deliver'd from the Bondage of Corruption*; and by way of Eminency, *the Adoption*, viz. *the Redemption of our Bodies.*

We are indeed *the Sons of God* before, upon account of the regenerating and sanctifying Virtue of the Holy Ghost; but finally and chiefly upon account of our Resurrection by the Power of the Divine Spirit. So St. *John* tells us, that then we shall be declared to be *the Sons of God*, after another manner than we are now:

1 Jo. 3. 1. *Behold what manner of Love the Father hath beſtowed upon us, that we ſhould be called the Sons of God. Now we are the Sons of God,* (that is, our Adoption is begun in our Regeneration and Sanctification) *but it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be*; we ſhall be much more eminently ſo at the Reſurrection. *We know, that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him.*

But the moſt expreſs and remarkable Text to this Purpoſe, is, *Luke* 20. 36. where good Men, after the Reſurrection, are for this Reaſon ſaid to be *the Children of God*, becauſe they are *the Children of the Reſurrection. But they who ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Reſurrection from the Dead, neither marry, nor are given in Marriage, neither can they die any more*; *for they are equal to the Angels, and are the Children of God, being the Children of the Reſurrection.* For this Reaſon they are ſaid to be *the Children of God*, becauſe they are raiſed by him to a new Life; and to be made Partakers of that which is promiſed to them, and reſerved for them. For all that are raiſed by the Power

Vol. V. Power of God, out of the Dust of the Earth, are not therefore *the Children of God*; but only they that have part in the blessed Resurrection to Eternal Life, and *do inherit the Kingdom prepared for them.* Not those who are raised to a perpetual Death, and the *Resurrection of Condemnation.* These are not *the Children of God*; but *the Children of Wrath*, and *the Children of Perdition.*

But the Resurrection of the Just, is the full and final Declaration, that we are *the Children of God*; not only because we are restored to a new Life, but because at the Resurrection, we are admitted to the full Possession of that blessed Inheritance which is purchased for us, and promised to us.

And the Spirit of God which is conferred upon Believers in their Regeneration, and afterwards dwells and resides in them, is the Pledge and earnest of our final Adoption, by our Resurrection to Eternal Life; and upon this account, and no other, is said to be the *Earnest* of our future Inheritance, and the *Seal* and

and Confirmation of it. *Eph.* 1. 13. *In whom alſo, after that ye believed, ye were ſealed by that Holy Spirit of Promiſe, which is the earneſt of our Inheritance, until the redemption of the purchaſed Poſſeſſion*; that is, the Holy Spirit of God which Chriſtians were made Partakers of, upon their ſincere Belief of the Chriſtian Religion, is the Seal and Earneſt of our Reſurrection to Eternal Life; as the Apoſtle plainly tells us, in that remakable Text; *Rom.* 8. 11. *If the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead dwell in you, he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

I have been the longer upon this, becauſe it ſerves fully to explain to us thoſe obſcure Phraſes, of the *Seal*, and *Earneſt*, and *firſt Fruits of the Spirit*, which many have miſtaken to import ſome particular and ſpiritual Revelation or Impreſſion upon the Minds of good Men, aſſuring them of their Salvation. Whereas the Apoſtle intended no more by them, but that the Spirit of God which dwells in Believers, enabling them *to mortifie*

the

the deeds of the Fleſh, and to bring forth
Vol. V. *the fruits of the Spirit*, is a Pledge and Earneſt to us, of a bleſſed Reſurrection to eternal Life by the Power of the Spirit of God, which now dwells in us, and is the ſame Spirit which raiſed up Jeſus from the dead. And in this Chapter, the Spirit of God is ſaid, *v.* 16. *To bear witneſs to our Spirits*, that is, to aſſure our Minds, *that we are the Children of God*; that is, that we are his Children now, and conſequently Heirs of a glorious Reſurrection to Eternal Life: For ſo it follows in the next Words, *and if Children, then Heirs, Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Chriſt; if ſo be that we ſuffer with him, that we may alſo be glorified together.* And this being glorified together with Chriſt at the Reſurrection, he calls, *v.* 19. *the manifeſtation of the Sons of God.* Thus you ſee how in Conformity to *the Son of God*, our elder Brother, we are ſaid to be *the Sons of God*, becauſe we are now regenerated, and ſhall at the laſt day be raiſed up to Eternal Life, by the Power of the Spirit of God. I proceed to the

Second

Second Thing I propounded to ſpeak to, for the clearing of theſe words, namely, in what Senſe Chriſt is ſaid to be *declared*, or *demonſtrated to be the Son of God by his Reſurrection from the dead.* By which the Apoſtle means theſe two things. Vol. V.

1. That by his Reſurrection from the dead, he was approved by God to be the true Meſſias, and vindicated to the World from all Suſpicion of being a Deceiver and Impoſtor. And conſequently in the

2. Place, That hereby God gave Teſtimony to the Truth and Divinity of his Doctrine.

1. By his Reſurrection from the dead, he was approved by God to be the True Meſſias, foretold by the Prophets, and expected at that time by the *Jews*, and ſufficiently vindicated to the World to be no Deceiver and Impoſtor.

And for our fuller Underſtanding of this, we are to conſider theſe *two* Things.

(1.) What the Apprehenſions and Expectations of the *Jews* were concerning the Meſſias. And,

(2.)

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(2.) What the many Crimes were which they laid to our Saviour's charge, and for which they condemned him.

(1.) What the Apprehensions and Expectations of the *Jews* were concerning the Messias. And it is very plain from the Evangelical History, that they generally apprehended these two things of him: That the Messias was to be *the Son of God*, and *the King of Israel*; and therefore that our Saviour, by affirming himself to be the Messias, did call himself *the Son of God*, and *the King of Israel*; *John* 1. 41. *Andrew* tells his Brother *Simon*, *We have found the Messias*, v. 45. *Philip* tells *Nathanael*, *We have found him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write*; that is, the Messias. *v.* 49. *Nathanael* upon Discourse with our Saviour, being convinced that he was the Messias, owns him in these Terms; *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.* John 6. 69. *Peter* declares his Belief that he was the Christ, or the Messias, in these Words, *We believe and are sure that thou art the Son of the living God.*

God. This appears likewiſe from the High-Prieſt's Queſtion to him, *Matth.* 26. 63. *Art thou the Chriſt*, (that is, the Meſſias) *the Son of the living God*; or as it is in St. *Mark*, *the Son of the Bleſſed*; compared with *Pilat*'s Queſtion, *Art thou the King of the Jews?* And when he was upon the Croſs, ſome reviled him under the Notion of *the Son of God*, Matth. 27. 40. *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the Croſs*: Others under the Notion of *the King of Iſrael*, v. 42. *If he be the King of Iſrael, let him come down from the Croſs.* From all which it is plain that the *Jews* expected and believed, that the true Meſſias was to be *the Son of God*, and *the King of Iſrael*; and whoever was not ſo, was a Deceiver and Impoſtor. But our Saviour affirmed himſelf to be the true Meſſias, and *the Son of God.* Now God by raiſing him from the dead did abundantly vindicate him to the World, from all ſuſpicion of Impoſture; and gave Teſtimony to him, that he was all that he ſaid of himſelf, *viz. the true Meſſias*, and *the Son of God.*

Which

V. Vol. Which will further appear, if we consider, (2*dly*,) What were the Crimes which the *Jews* laid to our Saviour's Charge, and for which they condemned him; and they were mainly these two, That by giving himself out to be *the Messias*, he made himself *King of Israel*, and *the Son of God*. Of the first of these, they accused him to *Pilate*; hoping by this Accusation to make him guilty of Sedition against the *Roman* Government; for saying, that he was *the King of Israel*. Of the other they accused him to the Chief Priests, as being guilty of Blasphemy, in that not being *the Messias*, he call'd himself *the Son of God*. And upon this they laid the main stress, as being a thing that would condemn him by their Law. They charged him with this in his life-time, as appears by those Words of our Saviour, *John* 10. 36. *Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the World, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?* And when he was arraigned before the Chief Priests, they accused him of this, and he owning

owning this Charge, *that he call'd himſelf the Son of God*, upon this they judge him guilty of Death. *Matth.* 26. 65, 66. *Then the High-Prieſt rent his Cloaths, and ſaid, He hath ſpoken Blaſphemy; what further need have we of witneſs? Behold, now ye have heard his Blaſphemy. What think ye? They anſwered, He is guilty of Death.* And when *Pilate* told them, that he found no Fault in him, they ſtill inſtance in this as his Crime, *John* 19. 7. *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die, becauſe he made himſelf the Son of God.*

Now this being the Crime which was charged upon him, and for which he was crucified, and put to Death; God, by raiſing him up from the dead, and taking him up into Heaven, gave Teſtimony to him, that he was no Impoſtor, and that he did not vainly arrogate to himſelf to be the Meſſias and *the Son of God*, God by raiſing him from the dead, by the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, gave a mighty Demonſtration to him, that he was *the Son of God.* For which Reaſon he is ſaid by the Apoſtle, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. to be *juſtified by the Spirit.* The Spirit gave Teſtimo-

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ay to him at his Baptism, and by the mighty Works that appeared in him in his Life time; but he was most eminently and remarkably *justified by the Holy Ghost, by his Resurrection from the Dead*; God hereby bearing him Witness, that he was unjustly condemned, and that he assumed nothing to himself, but what of right did belong to him, when he said he was the Messias, and *the Son of God.* For how could a Man that was condemned to die, for calling himself *the Son of God*, be more remarkably vindicated, and more clearly proved to be so; than by being raised from the dead, by the Power of God?

And, *2dly*, God did consequently hereby give Testimony to the Truth and Divinity of our Saviour's Doctrine. Being proved by his Resurrection to be *the Son of God*, this proved him to be a Teacher sent by him, and that what he declared to the World was the Mind and Will of God. For this none was more likely to know, and to report truly to Mankind, than *the Son of God*, who came from *the Bosom of his Father.* And because the Resurrection of Christ is so

ſo great a Teſtimony to the Truth of his Doctrine, hence it is that St. *Paul* tells us, that the belief of this one Article of Chriſt's Reſurrection, is ſufficient to a Man's Salvation, *Rom.* 10. 9. *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy Mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thy Heart, that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* The Reaſon is plain, becauſe the Reſurrection of Chriſt confirmed the Truth and Divinity of his Doctrine; ſo that the belief of our Saviour's Reſurrection does by neceſſary Conſequence infer the belief of his whole Doctrine. That God raiſed him from the dead, after he was condemned and put to Death for calling himſelf *the Son of God*, is a demonſtration that he really was *the Son of God*; and if he was *the Son of God*, the Doctrine which he taught was true, and from God.

And thus I have ſhewn you, how the *Reſurrection* of Chriſt from the dead, is a *powerful Demonſtration* that he was *the Son of God.*

All that remains, is briefly to draw ſome practical Inferences from the Conſideration of our Saviour's Reſurrection.

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1*ſt.* To confirm and eſtabliſh our Minds in the belief of the Chriſtian Religion, of which the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Dead is ſo great a Confirmation. And therefore I told you that this one Article is mentioned by St. *Paul* as the Sum and Abridgment of the Chriſtian Faith; *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and believe in thy heart that God hath raiſed him from the Dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* The belief of our Saviour's Reſurrection doth by neceſſary conſequence infer the belief of his whole Doctrine; for he who believes that God raiſed him from the Dead, after he was put to death for calling himſelf *the Son of God*, cannot but believe him to be *the Son of God*; and conſequently that the Doctrine which he delivered was from God.

2*dly.* The Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Dead aſſures us of a future Judgment, and of the Recompences and Rewards of another World. That Chriſt was raiſed from the Dead, is a demonſtration of another Life after this; and no man that believes the immortality of our Souls, and another Life after this, ever doubted

of

of a future Judgment; ſo that by the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Dead, God hath given aſſurance unto all men of a future Judgment, and conſequently of the Recompences and Rewards of another World.

The conſideration whereof ought to have a mighty influence upon us, more eſpecially to theſe three purpoſes.

1*ſt*. To raiſe our minds above the preſent Enjoyments of this Life. Were but men convinced of this great and obvious Truth, that there is an infinite difference between Time and Eternity, between a few days and everlaſting Ages; would we but ſometimes repreſent to our ſelves, what thoughts and apprehenſions dying Men have of this World, how vain and empty a thing it appears to them, how like a Pageant and Shadow it looks, as it paſſeth away from them; methinks none of theſe things could be a ſufficient temptation to any Man to forget God and his Soul; but notwithſtanding all the preſent delights and allurements of Senſe, we ſhould be ſtrongly intent upon the concernments of another World,

Vol. V. and almost wholly taken up with the thoughts of the vast Eternity which we are ready to enter into. For what is there in this World, this vast and howling Wilderness, this rude and barbarous Country which we are but to pass through, which should detain and entangle our Affections, and take off our Thoughts from our Everlasting Habitation, from that *better*, and that *heavenly Country*, where we hope to live and to be happy for ever?

2dly. The Consideration of the Rewards of another World should comfort and support us under the troubles and afflictions of this World. The hopes of a blessed Resurrection are a very proper Consideration to bear us up under the evils and pressures of this Life. If we hope for so great a Happiness hereafter, we may be contented to bear some Afflictions in this World; because the Blessedness which we expect will so abundantly recompence and outweigh our present Sufferings. So the Apostle assures us, Rom. 8. 18. *We know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that*

that shall be revealed in us. The consideration whereof was that which made the Primitive Christians to triumph in their Sufferings, and in the midst of all their Tribulations *to rejoyce in the hopes of the Glory of God*; because their Sufferings did really prepare and make way for their Glory. So the same Apostle tells us, 2 Cor. 4. 17. 18. *Our light Afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and Eternal weight of Glory; whilst we look not at the things which are seen; for the things which are seen are Temporal, but the things which are not seen are Eternal.*

3*dly*, and lastly, The assurance of our future Reward is a mighty Encouragement to Obedience and a Holy Life. What greater Encouragement can we have than this, that all the good which we do in this World will accompany us into the other? *That when we rest from our labours, our works will follow us?* That when we shall be stript of other things, and parted from them, these will still remain with us, and bear us company? Our Riches and Ho-

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nours, our sensual Pleasures and Enjoyments will all take their leave of us, when we leave this World; nay many times they do not accompany us so far as the Grave, but take occasion to forsake us, when we have the greatest need and use of them: but Piety and Virtue are *that better part which cannot be taken from us.* All the good actions which we do in this World will go along with us into the other, and through the Merits of our Redeemer procure for us, at the hands of a Gracious and Merciful God, a Glorious and Eternal Reward; not according to the meanness of our Services, but according to the Bounty of his Mind, and the vastness of his Treasures and Estate.

Now what an encouragement is this to Holiness and Obedience, to consider that it will all be our own another day; to be assured that whoever serves God faithfully, and does suffer for him patiently, does lay up so much Treasure for himself in another World, and provides lasting Comforts for himself, and faithful and constant Companions, that will never leave him nor forsake him?

Let

Let us then do all the good we can, while we have opportunity, and ſerve God with all our might, knowing that no good action that we do ſhall be loſt and fall to the ground, that every Grace and Virtue that we exerciſe in this life, and every degree of them, *ſhall receive their full recompence at the Reſurrection of the Juſt.* Vol. V.

How ſhould this inſpire us with Reſolution and Zeal and Induſtry in the Service of God, to have ſuch a Reward continually in our Eye? how ſhould it tempt us to our Duty, to have *a Crown* and *a Kingdom* offered to us, *Joys unſpeakable and full of Glory, ſuch things as Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man?* And *ſuch are the things which God hath laid up for them who love him heartily, and ſerve him faithfully in this World.*

SERMON

SERMON V.

The danger of Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity.

HEB. VI. 4, 5, 6.

For it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightned, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; If they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance: ſeeing they crucifie to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame.

THESE words are full of difficulties, and the miſunderſtanding of them hath not only been an occaſion of a great deal of trouble, and even deſpair to particular perſons, but one of the chief Reaſons

Vol. V. ſons why the Church of *Rome* did for a long time reject the Authority of this Book; which by the way I cannot but take notice of as a demonſtrative Inſtance both of the fallible Judgment of that Church, and of the fallibility of Oral Tradition; for St. *Jerome* more than once expreſly tells us, *that in his time* (which was about 400 years after Chriſt) *the Church of* Rome *did not receive this Epiſtle for Canonical*: But it is plain, that ſince that time, whether moved by the Evidence of the thing, or (which is more probable) by the Conſent and Authority of other Churches, they have received it, and do at this day acknowledge it for *Canonical*; from whence one of theſe two things will neceſſarily follow; either that they were in an error for 400 years together while they rejected it; or that they have ſince erred for a longer time in receiving it. One of theſe is unavoidable; for if the Book be *Canonical* now, it was ſo from the beginning; for *Bellarmine* himſelf confeſſeth (and if he had not confeſſed it, it is nevertheleſs true and certain) that the Church cannot make a Book *Canonical*,

nical, which was not ſo before; if it was not *Canonical* at firſt, it cannot be made ſo afterward; ſo that let them chuſe which part they will, it is evident, beyond all denyal, that the Church of *Rome* hath actually erred in her Judgment concerning the Authority of this Book; and one error of this kind is enough to deſtroy her Infallibility, there being no greater Evidence that a Church is not Infallible, than if it plainly appear that ſhe hath been deceived.

And this alſo is a convincing inſtance of the Fallibility of Oral Tradition. For if *that* be Infallible in delivering down to us the *Canonical* Books of Scripture, it neceſſarily follows, that whatever Books were delivered down to us for *Canonical* in one Age, muſt have been ſo in all Ages; and whatever was rejected in any Age, muſt always have been rejected: but we plainly ſee the contrary, from the inſtance of this Epiſtle, concerning which the Church of *Rome* (which pretends to be the great and faithful Preſerver of Tradition) hath in ſeveral Ages deliver'd ſeveral things. This is a peremptory inſtance both of

the Fallibility of the *Roman* Church, and of her Oral Tradition. Vol. V.

Having obſerved this by the way, which I could not well paſs by upon ſo fair an occaſion, I ſhall betake my ſelf to the explication of theſe words; towards which it will be no ſmall advantage to conſider the particular Phraſes and Expreſſions in the Text. *It is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightned*; that is, were ſolemnly admitted into the Church by Baptiſm, and embraced the profeſſion of Chriſtianity. Nothing was more frequent among the Ancients, than to call Baptiſm, φωτισμὸν *Illumination*, and thoſe who were baptized were called, φωτιζόμενοι *enlightned Perſons*, becauſe of that Divine Illumination which was convey'd to the minds of Men by the knowledge of Chriſtianity, the Doctrine whereof they made Profeſſion of at their Baptiſm. And therefore *Juſtin Martyr* tells us, *that by calling upon God the Father, and the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the name of the Holy Ghoſt*, ὁ φωτιζόμενος λέεται, *the enlightned Perſon is waſhed*; and again more expreſly, Καλεῖται δὲ τοῦτο λετρὸν φωτισμός, *this Laver* (ſpeaking of Baptiſm) *is called Illumination.*

Illumination. And St. *Cyprian* gives us the Reason; because by virtue of Baptism *in expiatum pectus ac purum desuper se lumen infundit, Light is infused from above into the purified Soul.* And that this Expression is so to be understood here in the Text, as also *Chap.* 10. 32. the *Syriac* and *Ethiopic* give us good ground to believe; for they render the Text thus, *It is impossible for those who have been once baptized, and have tasted of the Heavenly Gift.* And at the 10*th.* Chap. *v.* 32. which we translate, *But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions*; that is, call to mind the former days, in which after by Baptism ye had publickly embraced the Profession of Christianity, ye were upon that account exposed to many grievous Sufferings and Persecutions. So that I think there can be no great doubt, but, by *those that were once enlightned*, the Apostle means *those that were baptized.*

To proceed then, *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightned, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost*; these

two

V. Vol. two Expreſſions ſeem to denote the Spiritual Benefits and Graces of the Holy Ghoſt conferred upon Chriſtians by Baptiſm; particularly Regeneration, which is the proper work of the Holy Ghoſt, and Juſtification and Remiſſion of Sins. So we find Faith, whereby we are juſtified, called the Gift of God, *Eph.* 2. 8. *Faith is the gift of God*; and our Juſtification is called a Gift, and a free Gift five ſeveral times in one Chapter, *Rom.* 5. 15, 16, 17, 18. *But not as the offence, ſo alſo is the free gift; for if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jeſus Chriſt, hath abounded unto many*; and what this free Gift is, he tells us in the next words, *viz.* Juſtification, or Remiſſion of Sins, *v.* 16. *And not as it was by one that ſinned, ſo is the gift; for the judgment was by one to Condemnation; but the free gift is of many offences unto juſtification. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteouſneſs, ſhall reign in life by one; Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore as by the offence of one, judg-*

ment

ment came upon all men to condemnation: even ſo by the righteouſneſs of one, the free gift came upon all men unto juſtification of life. So that by the *Heavenly Gift*, I underſtand remiſſion of Sins; and by being *made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*, the ſanctifying Power and Efficacy of God's Spirit. Vol. V

And have taſted the good word of God; that is, entertained the Goſpel, which is here called *the good word of God*; by reaſon of the gracious promiſes contained in it, particularly the Promiſes of Eternal Life and Happineſs.

And the powers of the World to come, δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, the Powers of the Goſpel Age; that is, the miraculous Powers of the Holy Ghoſt which were beſtowed upon Men, in order to the propagation of the Goſpel. And that this is the true meaning of this Phraſe, will I think be very plain to any one who ſhall but conſider, that the word δυνάμεις is generally in Scripture uſed for miraculous Powers and Operations; and particularly to expreſs the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, which were beſtowed upon the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians; (I need not cite the par-

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ticular Texts for the proof of this they are so many and so well known; And then if we consider farther, tha the times of the Gospel, the days o the *Messias*, are frequently called b the Jews *Seculum futurum*, *The Ag to come*. And indeed this is the ver Phrase used by the LXX concernin our Saviour, *Isa.* 9. 6. where he is called according to our Translation, *The E verlasting Father*, but according t that of the LXX πατὴρ μέλλοντ αἰῶνος, *The Father of the future Ag* And this very Phrase is used once mo in this Epistle to the *Heb. ch.* 2. *For unto the Angels hath he not put subjection the World to come, whereof we n speak*. He had said before, *that the L was given by Angels*, v. 2. *If the wo spoken by Angels was stedfast*; but th dispensation of the Gospel, which h calls *The World to come*, or the futur Age, was not committed to them, th was administred by the *Son of God Unto the Angels hath he not put into sub jection the World to come*. And 'tis ob servable, that this Phrase is only use in this Epistle to the *Hebrews*, becau the *Jews* very well understood th meaning of it, being that whereb

the

they commonly expreſt the times of the Goſpel, according to that ancient Tradition of the Houſe of *Elias*, which diſtributed the duration of the World into three αἰῶνες, or Ages; the Age before the Law, the Age under the Law, and the Age of the *Meſſias*, which they called the *Seculum futurum*, or *the Age to come*; and which is likewiſe in Scripture called, *The laſt days*, or *times*, and the *concluſion of the Ages*; Concerning which, it was particularly propheſied, that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be poured forth upon Men in miraculous Gifts and Powers. And to this very purpoſe the Prophet *Joel* is cited by St. *Peter*, *Acts* 2. 16, 17. *This is that which was ſpoken by the Prophet* Joel, *And it ſhall come to paſs in the laſt days, (ſaith God) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all fleſh; and your Sons and your Daughters ſhall propheſie*, &c. From all which it is very evident, that by *taſting the powers of the World to come*, is meant, being partakers of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, which were poured forth in the Goſpel Age, by the *Jews* commonly called, *The World to come.* Vol. V.

If they ſhall fall away; that is, if

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after all this they ſhall apoſtatize from this Profeſſion, out of love to this preſent World, or from the fear of Perſecutions and Sufferings.

It is impoſſible to renew them again to Repentaince; that is, it is a thing very difficult, hardly to be hoped for, that ſuch wilful and notorious Apoſtates ſhould be reſtored again by Repentance. For the word ἀδύνατον, which we tranſlate *Impoſſible*, is not always to be taken in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, for that which abſolutely cannot be; but many times for that which is ſo very difficult, that it ſeems next to an impoſſibility. So our Saviour, that which in one place he calls *exceeding hard*, *viz. for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, he afterward calls *impoſſible with Men*; and ſo here I underſtand the Apoſtle, that thoſe who apoſtatize from Chriſtianity, after Baptiſm and the benefits of it, "*It is exceeding hard to recover them again by Repentance*: This Phraſe πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, *to renew them again to Repentance*, ſome underſtand of reſtoring them again to the Peace and Communion of the Church, by a courſe of Penance, ſuch as was pre-

ſcribed

ſcribed in the ancient Church to great Offenders; and then they underſtand by ἀδύνατον, not a *Natural*, but a *Moral Impoſſibility*; that which cannot be done according to the Orders and Conſtitutions of the Church; that is, the Church did refuſe to admit Apoſtates, and ſome other great Offenders, as Murderers and Adulterers, to a courſe of Penance, in order to their Reconciliation with the Church; This *Tertullian* tells us was the ſtrictneſs of the Church in his time, *Neque Idololatriæ, neque Sanguini pax ab Eccleſiâ redditur*; they admitted neither Idolaters, nor Murderers to the reconciliation of the Church. Though they were never ſo penitent, and ſhed never ſo many tears, yet he ſays they were *jejunæ pacis lacrimæ*, their tears were in vain, to reconcile them to the Peace and Communion of the Church. He ſays indeed, they did not abſolutely pronounce their caſe deſperate in reſpect of God's Pardon and Forgiveneſs; *ſed de veniâ Deo reſervamus*, for that they referr'd them to God: but they were never to be admitted again into the Church; ſo ſtrict were many Churches, and that upon the Autho-

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rity of this Text; though the Church of *Rome* was more moderate in this matter, and forthat Reaſon call'd the Authority of this Book into queſtion.

But I ſee no reaſon why theſe Words ſhould primarily be underſtood of reſtoring Men to the Communion of the Church by Penance; but they ſeem to be meant of reſtoring Men to the Favour of God by Repentance; of which indeed their being reſtored to the Communion of the Church was a good ſign. This the Apoſtle ſays was *very difficult*, for thoſe who after Baptiſm, and the ſeveral benefits of it, did apoſtatize from Chriſtianity, *to be recover'd again to Repentance.*

Seeing they crucifie to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame. This is ſpoken by way of Aggravation of the crime of Apoſtacy, that they who fall off from Chriſtianity, in effect and by interpretation do *crucifie the Son of God* over again, and expoſe him to ſhame and reproach, as the *Jews* did; for by denying and renouncing of him, they declare him to be an Impoſtor, and conſequently worthy of that death which he ſuffered, and that Ignominy which he was

expoſed

expoſed to; and therefore, in account of God, they are ſaid to do that, which by their actions they do approve; ſo that it is made a Crime of the higheſt Nature, as if they ſhould *crucifie the Son of God*, and uſe him in the moſt ignominious manner, even *tread under foot the Son of God*, as the expreſſion is to the ſame purpoſe, *Ch.* 10, 29.

Thus I have endeavour'd, as briefly and clearly as I could, to explain to you the true meaning and importance of the ſeveral Phraſes and Expreſſions in the Text; the ſenſe whereof amounts to this, that if thoſe who are baptized, and by Baptiſm have received Remiſſion of Sins, and do believe the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and the Promiſes of it, and are endow'd with the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, if ſuch perſons as theſe ſhall after all this apoſtatize from Chriſtianity, it is very hard, and next to an impoſſibility, to imagine how ſuch Perſons ſhould recover again by Repentance, ſeeing they are guilty of as great a Crime, as if in their own Perſons they had put to Death and ignominiouſly uſed *the Son of God*; becauſe by rejecting of

Vol. V. him, they declare to the World that he ſuffered deſervedly.

Having thus explained the words, in order to the further vindication of them, from the miſtakes and miſapprehenſions which have been about them, I ſhall endeavour to make out theſe *five* things.

1*ſt*, That the Sin here mention'd is not *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*.

2*dly*, That the Apoſtle does not declare it to be abſolutely impoſſible, but only that thoſe who are guilty of it are recover'd to Repentance with great difficulty.

3*dly*, That it is not a partial Apoſtacy from the Chriſtian Religion by any particular vicious Practice.

4*thly*, That it is a total Apoſtacy from the Chriſtian Religion, and more eſpecially to the Heathen Idolatry, which the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of.

5*thly*, The Reaſon of the difficulty of the recovery of thoſe who fall into this Sin.

1*ſt*, That the Sin here mention'd is not *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, which I have heretofore diſcourſed of, and ſhewn wherein the particular Nature of it does conſiſt. There are three things

things which do remarkably diſtinguiſh the Sin here ſpoken of in the Text, from *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt* deſcribed by our Saviour.

1*ſt*, The Perſons that are guilty of this Sin here in the Text, are evidently ſuch as had embraced Chriſtianity, and had taken upon them the Profeſſion of it: whereas thoſe whom our Saviour chargeth with *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, are ſuch as conſtantly oppoſed his Doctrine, and reſiſted the Evidence he offer'd for it.

2*dly*, The particular nature of *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt* conſiſted in blaſpheming the Spirit whereby our Saviour wrought his Miracles, and ſaying he did not do thoſe things by the Spirit of God, but by the aſſiſtance of the Devil; in that malicious and unreaſonable imputing of the plain Effects of the Holy Ghoſt to the Power of the Devil, and conſequently in an obſtinate refuſal to be convinced by the Miracles that he wrought: but here is nothing of all this ſo much as intimated by the Apoſtle in this place.

3*dly*, *The Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt* is declared to be abſolutely *unpardonable, both in this World, and in that which*

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which is to come: but this is not declared to be abſolutely unpardonable; which brings me to the

2*d*, Thing, namely, That this Sin here ſpoken of by the Apoſtle, is not ſaid to be abſolutely unpardonable. It is not *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*; and whatever elſe it be, it is not out of the compaſs of God's Pardon and Forgiveneſs. So our Saviour hath told us, *that all manner of Sin whatſoever that men have committed is capable of pardon, excepting only the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. And though the Apoſtle here uſes a very ſevere Expreſſion, that *if ſuch perſons fall away, it is impoſſible to renew them again to Repentance*; yet I have ſhewn that there is no neceſſity of underſtanding this Phraſe in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word *impoſſible*; but as it is elſewhere uſed, for that which is *extreamly difficult*. Nor indeed will our Saviour's Declaration, which I mention'd before, that all Sins whatſoever are pardonable, except *the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, ſuffer us to underſtand theſe words in the moſt rigorous Senſe.

3*dly*, The Sin here ſpoken of, is not a partial Apoſtacy from the Chriſtian Religion

Religion by any particular vicious Practice. Whosoever lives in the habitual practice of any Sin plainly forbidden by the Christian Law, may be said so far to have apostatized from Christianity: but this is not the *falling away* which the Apostle here speaks of. This may be bad enough, and the greater Sins any Man who professeth himself a Christian lives in, the more notoriously he contradicts his Profession, and falls off from Christianity, and the nearer he approacheth to the Sin in the Text, and the danger there threatned: but yet for all that, this is not that which the Apostle speaks of. Vol. V.

4*thly*, But it is a total Apostacy from the Christian Religion, more especially to the Heathen Idolatry, the renouncing of the true God, and our Saviour, and the Worship of false Gods, which the Apostle here speaks of. And this will be evident, if we consider the occasion and main scope of this Epistle. And that was to confirm the *Jews*, who had newly embraced Christianity, in the profession of that Religion; and to keep them from apostatizing from it, because of the Persecutions and Sufferings which attended

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tended that Profeſſion. It pleaſed God, when Chriſtianity firſt appeared in the World, to permit the Powers of the World to raiſe a vehement Perſecution againſt the Profeſſors of it, by reaſon whereof many out of baſe fear did apoſtatize from it, and in teſtimony of their renouncing it, were forced to Sacrifice to the Heathen Idols. This is that which the Apoſtle endeavours to caution and arm Men againſt throughout this Epiſtle. *Ch.* 2. 1. *Therefore we ought to give the more earneſt heed to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould fall away:* And, *Chap.* 3. 12. it is call'd *an evil heart of Unbelief to apoſtatize from the living God. Take heed, Brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of Unbelief, to depart from the living God*; that is, to fall from the Worſhip of the true God to Idolatry. And, *Chap.* 10. 23. *Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering, not forſaking the aſſembling of our ſelves together*; that is, not declining the Aſſemblies of Chriſtians, for fear of Perſecution; and, *v.* 26. it is call'd a *ſinning wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the Truth*; and, *v.* 39. *a drawing back to Perdition.*

And

And, *Ch.* 12. it is call'd by way of Eminency, *the Sin which ſo eaſily beſets*; the Sin, which in thoſe times of Perſecution, they were ſo liable to.

And I doubt not, but this is the Sin which St. *John* ſpeaks of, and calls *the Sin unto Death*, and does not require Chriſtians *to pray for thoſe who fall into it*, with any aſſurance that it ſhall be forgiven; 1 *John* 5. 16. *There is a Sin unto Death; I do not ſay that he ſhall pray for it. All Unrighteouſneſs is Sin, and there is a Sin not unto Death. We know that whoſoever is born of God, ſinneth not*; that is, does not fall into the Sin of Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity to that of the *Heathen* Idolatry: *But he that is begotten of God, keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one toucheth him not.* And then, *v.* 21. he adds this Caution, *Little Children keep your ſelves from Idols.* Which ſufficiently ſhews, what that Sin was which he was ſpeaking of before.

So that this being the Sin which the Apoſtle deſign'd to caution Men againſt throughout this Epiſtle, it is very evident what *falling away* it is he here ſpeaks of, namely, a total Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity, and more eſpecially to the Heathen Idolatry.

5*thly*,

5*thly*, We will conſider the Reaſon of the difficulty of Recovering ſuch Perſons by Repentance. *If they fall away, it is extremely difficult to renew them again to Repentance*; and that for theſe *three* Reaſons.

1. Becauſe of the greatneſs and heinouſneſs of the Sin.

2. Becauſe it renounceth, and caſteth off the means of Recovery.

3. Becauſe it is ſo high a Provocation of God to withdraw his Grace from ſuch Perſons.

1. Becauſe of the greatneſs and heinouſneſs of the Sin, both in the Nature and Circumſtances of it. It is a downright Apoſtacy from God, a direct renouncing of him, and rejecting of his Truth, after Men have owned it, and been inwardly perſwaded and convinced of it; and ſo the Apoſtle expreſſeth it in this Epiſtle, calling it an *Apoſtacy from the living God, a ſinning wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the Truth.* It hath all the Aggravations that a Crime is capable of, being againſt the cleareſt Light and Knowledge, and the fulleſt Conviction of a Man's Mind, concerning the Truth and Goodneſs of that Religion which he renounceth; againſt the greateſt

greatest Obligations laid upon him by the Grace and Mercy of the Gospel; after the free Pardon of Sins, and the Grace and Assistance of God's Spirit received, and a miraculous Power conferr'd, for a Witness and Testimony to themselves, of the undoubted Truth of that Religion which they have embraced. It is the highest Affront to the Son of God, who revealed this Religion to the World, and sealed it with his Blood; and, in effect, an expression of as high Malice to the Author of this Religion, as the *Jews* were guilty of, when they put him to so cruel and shameful a Death. Vol. V.

Now a Sin of this heinous Nature is apt naturally either to plunge Men into hardness and impenitency, or to drive them to despair; and either of these Conditions are effectual Barrs to their Recovery. And both these Dangers the Apostle warns Men of in this Epistle. *Ch.* 3. 12, 13. *Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, to apostatize from the living God: but exhort one another daily, whilst it is call'd to day, lest any of you be hardned through the deceitfulness of Sin.* Or else the Reflection

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ction upon ſo horrid a Crime is apt to drive a Man to Deſpair; as it did *Judas*, who, after he had betray'd *the Son of God*, could find no eaſe but by making away himſelf; the guilt of ſo great a Sin fill'd him with ſuch Terrors, that he was glad to flye to Death for Refuge, and to lay violent hands upon himſelf. And this likewiſe was the Caſe of *Spira*, whoſe Apoſtacy, though it was not total from the Chriſtian Religion, but only from the Purity and Reformation of it, brought him to that deſperation of Mind which was a kind of Hell upon Earth. And of this danger likewiſe the Apoſtle admoniſheth, *Ch.* 12. 15. *Looking diligently, leſt any man fail of the Grace of God* (or as it is in the Margine, *leſt any Man fall from the Grace of God*) *leſt any root of bitterneſs ſpringing up trouble you*; and then he compares the Caſe of ſuch Perſons to *Eſau*, who, when he had renounced his Birthright, to which the Bleſſing was annex'd, was afterwards, when he would have inherited the Bleſſing, rejected, and *found no place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears.*

2*dly*, Thoſe

2dly, Those who are guilty of this Sin, do renounce and cast off the means of their Recovery; and therefore it becomes extreamly difficult *to renew them again to Repentance.* They reject the Gospel, which affords the best Arguments and Means to Repentance, and renounce the only way of Pardon and Forgiveness. And certainly that Man is in a very sad and desperate Condition, the very nature of whose Disease is to reject the Remedy that should cure him. And this, the Apostle tells us, was the Condition of those who apostatized from the Gospel, *Chap.* 10. 26, 27. *For if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin; but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversary.* The great Sacrifice and Propitiation for Sin was *the Son of God*; and they who renounce him, what way of Expiation can they hope for afterward? what can they expect, but to fall into his Hands as a Judge, whom they have rejected as a Sacrifice and a Saviour? And then,

3dly. Those who are guilty of this

Sin, provoke God in the higheſt manner to withdraw his Grace and Holy Spirit from them, by the Power and Efficacy whereof they ſhould be brought to Repentance; ſo that it can hardly otherwiſe be expected, but that God ſhould leave thoſe to themſelves, who have ſo unworthily forſaken him; and wholly withdraw his Grace and Spirit from ſuch Perſons, as have ſo notoriouſly *offer'd deſpite to the Spirit of Grace.*

I do not ſay that God always does this, he is ſometimes better to ſuch Perſons than they have deſerved from him, and ſaves thoſe who have done what they can to undo themſelves, and mercifully puts forth his Hand to recover them who were *drawing back to Perdition*; eſpecially if they were ſuddenly ſurprized by the violence of Temptation, and yielded to it, not deliberately and out of choice, but merely through weakneſs and infirmity, and ſo ſoon as they reflected upon themſelves, did return and repent: This was the caſe of St. *Peter*, who being ſurprized with a ſudden fear denied Chriſt; but being admoniſh'd of his Sin by the ſignal which our Saviour had given him, he was recovered by a ſpeedy and hearty Repentance. And

ſo

so likewise several of the Primitive Christians, who were at first overcome by fear to renounce their Religion, did afterwards recover themselves, and died resolute Martyrs: but it is a very dangerous State, out of which but few recover, and with great difficulty.

And thus I have done with the *five* things I propounded to make out, for the clearing of this Text from the mistakes and misapprehensions which have been about it. I shall now draw some useful Inferences from hence by way of Application, that we may see how far this doth concern our selves; and they shall be these.

1*st*. From the Supposition here in the Text, that such Persons as are there described (namely, those who have been baptized, and by Baptism have received remission of Sins, and did firmly believe the Gospel, and the Promises of it, and were endowed with miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost,) that these may fall away; this should caution us all against Confidence and Security; when those that have gone thus far may fall, *let him that standeth take heed.*

Some are of opinion, that those whom the Apostle here describes are

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true and ſincere Chriſtians, and that when he ſays, *it is impoſſible if they fall away, to renew them again to Repentance*, he means that they cannot fall away totally, ſo as to ſtand in need of being renewed again to Repentance: But this is directly contrary to the Apoſtle's deſign, which was to caution Chriſtians againſt Apoſtacy, becauſe if they did fall away, their recovery would be ſo exceeding difficult; which Argument does plainly ſuppoſe that they might fall away.

On the other hand, there are others who think the Perſons, here deſcribed by the Apoſtle, to be Hypocritical Chriſtians, who for ſome baſe ends had entertained Chriſtianity, and put on the Profeſſion of it, but not being ſincere and in good earneſt, would forſake it when Perſecution came. But beſides that this is contrary to the deſcription which the Apoſtle makes of theſe Perſons, who are ſaid *to have taſted of the Heavenly Gift, and to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*; by which if we underſtand Juſtification and Remiſſion of Sins, and the Sanctifying Virtue of the Holy Ghoſt, which in all probability is the meaning of theſe Phraſes,

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these are Blessings which did not belong to Hypocrites, and which God does not bestow upon them; I say, besides this, there is no reason to imagine that the Apostle intended such Persons, when it is likely that there were very few Hypocrites in those times of Persecution; for what should tempt Men to dissemble Christianity, when it was so dangerous a Profession? or what Worldly Ends could Men have in taking that Profession upon them, which was so directly contrary to their Worldly Interests?

So that upon the whole matter, I doubt not but the Apostle here means those who are real in the Profession of Christianity, and that such *might fall away*. For we may easily imagine, that Men might be convinced of the Truth and Goodness of the *Christian Doctrine*, and in good earnest embrace the Profession of it, and yet not be so perfectly weaned from the World, and so firmly rooted and established in that Perswasion, as when it came to the Tryal to be able to quit all for it, and to bear up against all the Terrors and Assaults of Persecution; so that they might be real Christians, and no Hypocrites,

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though they were not ſo perfectly eſtabliſhed and confirmed, and ſo ſincerely reſolved as many others. They were not like St. *Paul*, and thoſe tryed Perſons whom he ſpeaks of, *Rom.* 8. 35, 37. *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? Nay, in all theſe things we are more than Conquerours.* (They had been try'd by all theſe, and yet had held out) upon which he breaks out into thoſe triumphant Expreſſions; *I am perſwaded, that neither death nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* They might not (I ſay) be like thoſe: and yet for all that be real in their Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and no Hypocrites.

In ſhort, I take them to be ſuch as our Saviour deſcribes him to be, *who received the ſeed into ſtony places*, namely *he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it: yet hath he not root in himſelf, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or perſecution ariſeth becauſe of*

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the word, by and by he is offended. This is no deſcription of a Hypocrite; but of one that was real, as far as he went, (for he is ſaid *to receive the word with joy*) but was not well rooted, and come to ſuch a confirmed State, as reſolutely to withſtand the aſſaults of Perſecution. Vol. V.

So that tho' we have truly embraced Chriſtianity, and are in a good degree ſincere in the Profeſſion of it, yet there is great Reaſon why we ſhould neither be *ſecure* nor *confident in our ſelves.* Not *ſecure*, becauſe there is great danger that our Reſolution may be born down one time or other by the Aſſaults of Temptation, if we be not continually vigilant, and upon our Guard. Not *confident in our ſelves*; becauſe *we ſtand by Faith, and Faith is the gift of God*; therefore as the Apoſtle infers, *we ſhould not be high minded, but fear.* Men may have gone a great way in Chriſtianity, and have been ſincere in the Profeſſion of it; and yet afterwards may apoſtatize in the foulеſt manner, not only fall off to a vicious Life, but even deſert the Profeſſion of their Religion. I would to God the Experience of the World did not give us too much Rea-

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ſon to believe the Poſſibility of this. When we ſee ſo many revolt from the Profeſſion of the reformed Religion, to the Corruptions and Superſtitions of *Rome*; And others from a religious and ſober Life, to plunge themſelves into all kind of Lewdneſs and Debauchery, and it is to be feared, into Atheiſm and Infidelity; Can we doubt any longer whether it be poſſible for Chriſtians to fall away? I wiſh we were as certain of the poſſibility of their Recovery, as we are of their Falling, and that we had as many Examples of the one as of the other.

Let us then be very vigilant over our ſelves, and according to the Apoſtle's Exhortation, 2 *Pet.* 3. 17. *Seeing we know theſe things before, beware, leſt we alſo being led away with the Error of the wicked, fall from our own ſtedfaſtneſs.*

2*dly*, This ſhews us how great an Aggravation it is, for Men to Sin againſt the Means of Knowledge which the Goſpel affords, and the Mercies which it offers unto them. That which aggravated the Sin of theſe Perſons was, that after they *were once enlightned*, that is, at their Baptiſm were inſtructed in the

the Chriſtian Doctrine, the cleareſt and moſt perfect Revelation that ever was made of God's Will to Mankind, that after they were *juſtified freely by God's Grace*, and had received Remiſſion of Sins, and had many other Benefits conferred upon them; that after all this, they ſhould fall off from this *Holy Religion*. This was that which did ſo heighten and enflame their Guilt, and made their Caſe ſo near deſperate. The two great aggravations of Crimes are Wilfulneſs and Ingratitude; if a Crime be wilfully committed, and committed againſt one that hath obliged us by the greateſt Favours and Benefits. Now he commits a fault wilfully, who does it againſt the clear knowledge of his Duty. Ignorance excuſeth; for ſo far as a Man is ignorant of the Evil he does, ſo far the Action is involuntary: but knowledge makes it to be a wilful Fault. And this is a more peculiar Aggravation of the Sins of Chriſtians, becauſe God hath afforded them the greateſt means and opportunities of Knowledge; that Revelation which God hath made of his Will to the World by our Bleſſed Saviour, is the cleareſt Light that ever Mankind

Vol. V. Mankind had, and the mercies which the Goſpel brings are the greateſt that ever were offer'd to the Sons of Men; the free Pardon and Remiſſion of all our Sins, and the aſſiſtance of God's Grace and Holy Spirit, to help the weakneſs of our Nature, and enable us to do what God requires of us: So that we who ſin after Baptiſm, after the knowledge of Chriſtianity, and thoſe great Bleſſings which the Goſpel beſtows on Mankind, are of all Perſons in the World the moſt inexcuſable. The Sins of Heathens bear no proportion to ours, becauſe they never enjoyed thoſe means of Knowledge, never had thoſe Bleſſings conferred upon them, which Chriſtians are Partakers of; ſo that we may apply to our ſelves thoſe ſevere words of the Apoſtle in this Epiſtle, *How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great Salvation*? Hear how our Saviour aggravates the Faults of Men upon this account, of the wilfulneſs of them, and their being committed againſt the expreſs Knowledge of God's Will; *Luke* 12. 47, 48. *The Servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beat-*

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en with many stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom Men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. The Means and Mercies of the Gospel are so many Talents committed to our Trust, of the neglect whereof a severe Account will be taken at the Day of Judgment. If we be wilful Offenders, there is no Excuse for us, and little hopes of Pardon. *If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth,* (says the Apostle in this Epistle) *there remains no more sacrifice for sin.* I know the Apostle speaks this particularly of the Sin of *Apostacy from Christianity*; but it is in proportion true of all other Sins, which those who have received the Knowledge of the Truth are guilty of. They, who after they have entertained Christianity, and made some progress in it, and been in some measure reformed by it, do again relapse into any vicious course, do thereby render their Condition very dangerous. So St. *Peter* tells us, 2 *Pet.* 2. 20, 21. *If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein,*

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Vol. V. *and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them.* Therefore we may do well to consider seriously what we do, when, under the Means and Opportunities of Knowledge which the Gospel affords us, and the inestimable Blessings and Favours which it confers upon us, we live in any wicked and vicious course. Our Sins are not of a common rate, when they have so much of Wilfulness and Unworthiness in them. If Men shall be severely punish'd for living against the Light of Nature; what vengeance shall be poured on those who offend against the Glorious Light of the Gospel? *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come*, &c.

3dly, The Consideration of what hath been said is Matter of Comfort to those, who upon every Failing and Infirmity are afraid they have committed *the unpardonable Sin*, and that it is impossible for them to be restor'd by Repentance. There are many who being of a dark and melancholy Temper, are

are apt to represent things worse to themselves than there is reason for, and do many times fancy themselves guilty of great Crimes, in the doing or neglecting of those things which in their nature are indifferent, and are apt to aggravate and blow up every little Infirmity into an unpardonable Sin. Most Men are apt to extenuate their Sins, and not to be sensible enough of the Evil and Heinousness of them; but it is the peculiar Infelicity of Melancholy Persons, to look upon their Faults as blacker and greater, than in truth they are; and whatsoever they hear and read in Scripture, that is spoken against the grossest and most enormous Offenders, they apply to themselves; and when they hear of the *Sin against the Holy Ghost*, and *the Sin unto Death*, or read this Text which I am now treating of, they presently conclude that they are guilty of these Sins, and that this is a description of their Case. Whereas *the Sin against the holy Ghost* is of that nature, that probably none but those that saw our Saviour's Miracles are capable of committing it; and excepting *that*, there is no Sin whatsoever that is unpardonable.

pardonable. As for *the Sin unto Death*, and *that* here spoken of in the Text, I have shewn that they are a total Apostacy from the *Christian Religion*, more especially to the Heathen Idolatry; which these Persons I am speaking of, have no reason to imagine themselves guilty of. And though great and notorious Crimes committed by Christians, may come near to this, and it may be very hard for those who are guilty of them, to recover themselves again to Repentance; yet to be sure, for the common Frailties and Infirmities of Human Nature, there is an open way of Pardon in the Gospel, and they are many times forgiven to us upon a General Repentance; so that upon account of these, which is commonly the case of the Persons I am speaking of, there is not the least ground of Despair; and though it be hard many times for such Persons to receive Comfort, yet it is easie to give it, and that upon sure Grounds, and as clear Evidence of Scripture, as there is for any thing; so that the first thing that such Persons, who are so apt to judge thus hardly of themselves, are to be convinced of (if possible)

ſible) is this, that they ought rather to truſt the Judgment of others concerning themſelves, than their own Imagination, which is ſo diſtemper'd, that it cannot make a true Repreſentation of things. I know that where Melancholy does mightily prevail, it is hard to perſwade People of this: but 'till they be perſwaded of it, I am ſure all the Reaſon in the World will ſignifie nothing to them.

4*thly*, This ſhould make Men afraid of great and preſumptuous Sins, which come near Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity; ſuch as deliberate Murder, Adultery, groſs Fraud and Oppreſſion, or notorious and habitual Intemperance. For what great difference is there, whether Men renounce Chriſtianity; or profeſſing to believe it, *do in their Works deny it?* Some of theſe Sins which I have mention'd, particularly Murder and Adultery, were ranked in the ſame degree with Apoſtacy, by the Ancient Church; and ſo ſevere was the Diſcipline of many Churches, that Perſons guilty of theſe Crimes, were never admitted to the Peace and Communion of the Church again, whatever Teſtimony they gave of their Repentance.

pentance. I will not say but this was too rigorous; but this shews how inconsistent with Christianity these Crimes, and others of the like degree of heinousness, were in those days thought to be. They did not indeed, as *Tertullian* tells us, think such Persons absolutely incapable of the Mercy of God; but after such a Fall, so notorious a Contradiction to their Christian Profession, they thought it unfit afterwards that they should ever be reckon'd in the number of Christians.

5*thly*, It may be useful for us upon this Occasion to reflect a little upon the ancient Discipline of the Church, which in some places (as I have told you) was so severe, as in case of some great Crimes after Baptism, as Apostacy to the Heathen Idolatry, Murder, and Adultery, never to admit those that were guilty of them, to the Peace and Communion of the Church; but in all Churches was so strict, as not to admit those who fell after Baptism into great and notorious Crimes, to Reconciliation with the Church, but after a long and tedious course of Penance, after the greatest and most publick Testimonies of Sorrow and Repentance, after long

long Fasting and Tears, and the greatest signs of Humiliation that can be imagined. In case of the greatest Offences they were seldom reconciled, till they came to lye upon their Deathbeds: And in case of other scandalous Sins, not 'till after the Humiliation of many Years. This perhaps may be thought too great Severity; but I am sure we are as much too remiss now, as they were over rigorous then: but were the Ancient Discipline of the Church in any degree put in practice now, what case would the generality of Christians be in? In what Herds and Shoals would Men be driven out of the Communion of the Church? 'Tis true, the prodigious Degeneracy and Corruption of Christians hath long since broke these Bounds, and 'tis morally impossible to revive the strictness of the ancient Discipline in any measure, till the World grow better: but yet we ought to reflect, with shame and confusion of Face, upon the purer Ages of the Church, and sadly to consider, how few among us would in those Days have been accounted Christians; and upon this Consideration to be provoked to an Emulation

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of those Better Times, and to a Reformation of those Faults and Miscarriages, which in the best days of Christianity were reckon'd inconsistent with the Christian Profession; and to remember, that though the Discipline of the Church be not now the same it was then, yet the Judgment and Severity of God is; and that those who live in any vicious course of Life, though they continue in the Communion of the Church, yet they shall be *shut out of the Kingdom of God. We are sure that the Judgment of God will be according to Truth, against them which commit such things.*

6thly, and lastly, The Consideration of what hath been said, should confirm and establish us in the Profession of our Holy Religion. 'Tis true, we are not now in danger of apostatizing from Christianity to the Heathen Idolatry; but we have too many sad Examples of those who apostatize from the Profession of the Gospel, which they have taken upon them in Baptism, to Atheism and Infidelity, to all manner of Impiety and Lewdness. There are many who daily fall off from the Profession of the *Reformed Religion*, to the

groſs Errors and Superſtitions of the *Roman* Church, which in many things does too nearly reſemble the old Pagan Idolatry. And what the Apoſtle here ſays of the Apoſtates of his time, is proportionably true of thoſe of our days, that *they who thus fall away*, it is *extreamly difficult to renew them again to Repentance.* And it ought to be remembred, that the guilt of this kind of Apoſtacy hath driven ſome to Deſpair; as in the Caſe of *Spira*, who, for reſiſting the Light and Convictions of his Mind, was caſt into thoſe Agonies, and fill'd with ſuch Terrors, as if *the very pains of Hell had taken hold of him*; and in that fearful Deſpair, and in the midſt of thoſe Horrors, he breathed out his Soul. Vol. V.

Let us then hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering; and let us take heed how we contradict the Profeſſion of our Faith, by any Impiety and Wickedneſs in our Lives; remembring, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* I will conclude with the words of the Apoſtle immediately after the Text, *The earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them*

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by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God. But that which beareth thorns and briars, is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. And how gladly would I add the next words! *But, beloved, we are perswaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Christ the Author: and Obedience the Condition of Salvation.

HEB. V. 9.

And being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

THIS is spoken of Christ, our great High Priest under the Gospel; upon the Excellency of whose Person, and the Efficacy of his Sacrifice for the Eternal Benefit and Salvation of Mankind, the Apostle insists so largely in this, and the following Chapters; but the Summ of all is briefly comprehended in the Text, that our High Priest *being made perfect, became the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him.*

Vol. V. In which words we have these four things considerable,

1*st*, The great Blessing and Benefit here spoken of, and that is *Eternal Salvation*; and this implies in it, not only our Deliverance from Hell, and Redemption from Eternal Misery; but the obtaining of Eternal Life and Happiness for us.

2*dly*, The Author of this great Blessing and Benefit to Mankind; and that is *Jesus Christ, the Son of God*; who is here represented to us under the notion of our *High Priest*, who, by making Atonement for us, and reconciling us to God, is said to be the *Author of Eternal Salvation* to Mankind.

3*dly*, The Way and Means whereby he became the Author of our Salvation; *being made perfect, he became the Author of Eternal Salvation.* The word is τελειωθεὶς, having consummated his work, and finish'd his Course, and receiv'd the Reward of it. For this word hath an allusion to those that run in a Race, where he that wins receives the Crown. And to this the Apostle plainly alludes, *Phil.* 3. 12. where he says, *not as though I had already attained*, οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον, not as if I had already taken hold of the Prize; but

but I am preſſing, or reaching forward towards it; ἢ ἤδη τετελείωμαι, or were already perfect; that is, not as if I had finiſh'd my Courſe, or had the Prize or Crown in my hand; but I am preſſing forward towards it. In like manner, our bleſſed Saviour, when he had finiſh'd the Courſe of his Humiliation and Obedience, which was accompliſh'd in his Sufferings, and had receiv'd the Reward of them, being riſen from the Dead, and exalted to the Right Hand of God, and crown'd with Glory and Honour, he is ſaid to be τελειωθεὶς made perfect; and therefore when he was giving up the Ghoſt upon the Croſs, he ſaid, *John* 19. 30. τετέλεσται, *it is finiſh'd*, or perfected; that is, he had done all that was neceſſary to be done, by way of ſuffering, for our Redemption. And the ſame word is likewiſe uſed *Luke* 13. 32. concerning our Saviour's Sufferings, *I do cures to day and to morrow*, Καὶ τῇ τρίτῃ τελειοῦμαι, *and the third day I ſhall be perfected*; this he ſpake concerning his own death. And therefore, *Chap.* 2. 10. God is ſaid *to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through Sufferings*; διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι. And thus our High Prieſt being *made perfect* in this Senſe,

that is, having finish'd his Course, which was accomplished in his Sufferings, and having received the Reward of them, in being exalted at the Right Hand of God, *he became the Author of Eternal Salvation to us.*

4*thly*, You have here the qualification of the Persons, who are made Partakers of this great Benefit, or the Condition upon which it is suspended, and that is *Obedience. He became the Author of eternal Salvation to them that obey him.*

These are the main things contained in the Text. For the fuller Explication whereof, I shall take into consideration these five things.

1*st*. How, and by what means Christ is the *Author of our Salvation.*

2*dly*, What *Obedience* the Gospel requires as a Condition, and is pleased to accept as a Qualification, in those who hope for eternal Salvation.

3*dly*, We will consider the *possibility* of performing this Condition, by that Grace and Assistance which is offer'd, and ready to be afforded to us by the Gospel.

4*thly*, The *necessity* of this *Obedience*, in order to Eternal Life and Happiness.

And 5*thly*, I shall shew that this is no prejudice

prejudice to the *Law of Faith*, and the *free Grace and Mercy* of God, declared in the Gospel. Vol. V.

1*st*, We will consider how, and by what means *Christ is the Author of our Salvation*; and this is contain'd in these words, *Being made perfect, he became the Author of Eternal Salvation*, that is (as I told you before) having finish'd his Course, which was accomplish'd in his last Sufferings; and having received the Reward of them, being exalted at the right hand of God, he became the *Author of eternal Salvation* to us; so that by all that he did, and suffer'd for us, in the days of his Flesh, and in the state of his Humiliation, and by all that he still continues to do for us, now that he is in Heaven at the right hand of God; he hath effected and brought about the great Work of our Salvation. His Doctrine and his Life, his Death and Sufferings, his Resurrection from the Dead, and his powerful Intercession for us at the Right Hand of God, have all a great influence upon the reforming and saving of Mankind; and by all these Ways and Means, he is *the Author* and Cause *of our Salvation*; as a Rule, and as a Pattern, as a Price and Propitiation,

Vol. V. tiation, and as a Patron and Advocate that is continually pleading our Cauſe, and interceding with God on our behalf, *for mercy and grace to help in time of need.*

And indeed our condition requir'd an High Prieſt who was qualified in all theſe reſpects, for the recovery of Mankind out of that corrupt and degenerate ſtate into which it was ſunk; an High Prieſt *whoſe lips ſhould preſerve knowledge*, and from whoſe mouth we might learn the Law of God; whoſe life ſhould be a perfect Pattern of Holineſs to us, and his Death a propitiation for the ſins of the whole World; and by whoſe Grace and Aſſiſtance, we ſhould be endowed with Power and Strength to mortifie our Luſts, and to perfect Holineſs in the Fear of God; and therefore *ſuch an High Prieſt became us, who was holy, harmleſs, undefiled, and ſeparate from Sinners, who might have compaſſion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way, and being himſelf compaſt with infirmities, might have the feeling of ours, being in all points tempted as we are, only without ſin*; and, in a word, *might be able to ſave to the utmoſt all thoſe that come to God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make interceſſion for us.*

By

By these Qualifications our High Priest is described in this Epistle; and by these he is every way suited to all our Defects and Infirmities, all our Wants and Necessities; to instruct our Ignorance by his Doctrine, and to lead us in the Path of Righteousness by his most Holy and most Exemplary Life; to expiate the guilt of our Sins by his Death; and to procure Grace and Assistance for us, by his prevalent Intercession on our behalf. By all these ways, and in all these respects, he is said to be *the Author of Eternal Salvation.*

1*st*, By the Holiness and Purity of his Doctrine, whereby we are perfectly instructed in the Will of God and our Duty, and powerfully excited and perswaded to the Practice of it. The Rules and Directions of a holy Life were very obscure before, and the Motives and Encouragements to Virtue but weak and ineffectual, in comparison of what they are now render'd by the Revelation of the Gospel. The general corruption of Mankind, and the vicious Practice of the World, had in a great measure blurr'd and defac'd the Natural Law; so that the Heathen World, for many Ages, had but a very dark

dark and doubtful knowledge of their Duty, especially as to several instances of it. The Custom of several Vices had so prevail'd among Mankind, as almost quite to extinguish the natural Sense of their Evil and Deformity. And the *Jews*, who enjoy'd a considerable degree of *Divine Revelation*, had no strict regard to the Morality of their Actions; and contenting themselves with some kind of outward Conformity to the bare *Letter* of the Ten Commandments, were almost wholly taken up with little Ceremonies and Observances, in which they placed the main of their Religion, almost wholly neglecting the greater Duties *and weightier matters of the Law*.

And therefore our Blessed Saviour, to free Mankind from these wandrings and uncertainties about the Will of God, revealed the Moral Law, and explained the full force and meaning of it, clearing all doubts, and supplying all the defects of it, by a more particular and explicite Declaration of the several parts of our Duty, and by Precepts of greater Perfection, than the World was sufficiently acquainted withal before; of greater Humility and more Universal Charity; of abstaining from Revenge,

and

and forgiving Injuries, and returning to our Enemies Good for Evil, and Love for ill-will, and Bleſſings and Prayers for Curſes and Perſecutions. Theſe Virtues indeed were ſometimes, and yet but very rarely, recommended before in the Counſels of wiſe Men; but either not in that degree of Perfection, or not under that degree of Neceſſity, and as having the force of Laws, and laying an univerſal obligation of indiſpenſable Duty upon all Mankind.

And as our bleſſed Saviour hath given a greater clearneſs, and Certainty, and Perfection, to the rule of our Duty, ſo he hath reveal'd, and brought into a clearer Light, more powerful Motives and Encouragements to the conſtant and careful Practice of it; for *Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Goſpel*; the Reſurrection of Chriſt from the Dead being a plain and convincing Demonſtration, of the *Immortality of our Souls*, and another Life after this, and an Evidence to us both of his Power, and of the fidelity of his promiſe, to raiſe us from the Dead. Not but that Mankind had ſome obſcure Apprehenſions of theſe things before. Good Men had always good hopes of another Life,

and

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and future Rewards in another World; and the worst of Men were not without some fears of the Judgment and Vengeance of another World: but Men had disputed themselves into great doubts and uncertainties about these things; and as Men that are in doubt, are almost indifferent which way they go; so the uncertain apprehensions which Men had of a future State, and of the Rewards and Punishments of another World, had but a very faint influence upon the minds of Men, and wanted that pressing and determining force to Virtue and a good Life, which a firm Belief and clear Conviction of these things, would have infused into them.

But now *the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ* hath scatter'd all these Clouds, and chased away that gross Darkness which hid the other World from our sight, and hath removed all doubts concerning the Immortality of Mens Souls, and their future State; and now *the Kingdom of Heaven*, with all its Treasures of Life, and Happiness, and Glory, lies open to our view, and *Hell is also naked before us, and Destruction hath no covering*. So that the hopes and fears of Men are now perfectly awakened, and all sorts of

Considerations

Considerations that may serve to quicken and encourage our Obedience, and to deter and affright Men from a wicked Life, are exposed to the view of all Men, and do stare every Man's Conscience in the face. And this is that which renders the Gospel so admirable and powerful an Instrument for the reforming of Mankind, and, as the Apostle calls it, *the mighty power of God unto Salvation*; because therein Life and Immortality are set before us, as the certain and glorious Reward of our Obedience; and *therein* also *the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* So that considering the perfection of our Rule, and the powerful enforcements of it upon the Consciences of Men, by the clear discovery and firm assurance of the Eternal Recompence of another World; nothing can be imagined better suited to its end, than the Doctrine of the Gospel is to make Men wise, and holy, and good, unto Salvation; both by instructing them perfectly in their Duty, and urging them powerfully to the practice of it.

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2dly, The Example of our Saviour's life is likewise another excellent Means to this End. The Law lays an Obligation upon

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upon us; but a pattern gives life and encouragement, and renders our Duty more easie, and practicable, and familiar to us; for here we see obedience to the Divine Law practised in our own Nature, and performed by a Man like our selves, *in all things like unto us, Sin only excepted.* 'Tis true indeed, this exception makes a great difference, and seems to take off very much from the encouraging Force and Virtue of this *Example.* No wonder if he that was without Sin, and was God as well as Man, performed all Righteousness; and therefore, where is the encouragement of this *example?* That our Nature, pure and uncorrupted, supported and assisted by the Divinity to which it was united, should be perfectly conformed to the Law of God, as it is no strange thing, so neither doth it seem to have that force and encouragement in it, which an Example more suited to our weakness might have had. But then this cannot be deny'd, that it hath the advantage of perfection, which a Pattern ought to have, and to which, though we can never attain, yet we may always be aspiring towards it; and certainly we cannot better learn, how God would have Men

to

to live, than by seeing how God himself lived, when he was pleased to assume our Nature, and to become Man. Vol. V.

And then, we are to consider, that the Son of God did not assume our Nature in its highest Glory and Perfection, but compast with Infirmities, and liable in all points to be tempted like as we are; but still it was without Sin; and therefore God doth not exact from us perfect Obedience, and that we should *fulfil all Righteousness*, as *he* did; he makes allowance for the corruption of our Nature, and is pleased to accept of our sincere, though very imperfect Obedience. But after all this, his *human Nature* was united to the *Divinity*, and he had the *Spirit without measure*; and this would indeed make a wide difference between us and our *Pattern*, as to the purpose of Holiness and Obedience, if we were destitute of that assistance which is necessary to enable us to the discharge of our Duty: But this God offers, and is ready to afford to us, for he hath promised *to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him*; and *the Spirit of him that raised up Christ Jesus from the Dead*, dwells in all good men, who sincerely desire to do the Will of God; *in the working out our*

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Salvation, God worketh in us both to will and to do.

So that as to that Obedience which the Gospel requires of us, if we be not wanting to our selves; if we do not *receive the Grace of God in vain*, and *quench and resist his blessed Spirit*, we may be as really assisted as *the Son of God* himself was; for, in this respect, all true and sincere Christians are *the Sons of God*; so that St. *Paul* tells us, *Rom.* 8. 14. *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.*

So that if all things be duly consider'd, the Life of our blessed Saviour, as it is the most perfect, so in the main, it is a very proper *Pattern* for our imitation, and could not have come nearer to us, without wanting that perfection which is necessary to a compleat and absolute Pattern. *The Son of God* condescended to every thing that might render him the most familiar and equal Example to us, excepting *that*, which as it was impossible, so had been infinitely dishonourable to him, and would have spoil'd the perfection of his Example; he came as near to us as was fit or possible, *being in all things like unto us, Sin only excepted*; that is, abating that one thing,

thing, which he came to deſtroy and abolish, and which would have deſtroyed the very end of his coming; for if he had not been *without Sin*, he could neither have made an *expiation* for Sin, nor have been a perfect *Pattern* of Holineſs and Obedience. Vol. V.

And as the Life of our bleſſed Saviour had all the perfection that is requiſite to an *abſolute Pattern* (ſo that by conſidering his Temper and Spirit, and the actions of his Life, we may reform all the vicious inclinations of our Minds, and the exorbitances of our Paſſions, and the errors and irregularities of our Lives) ſo it is a very *powerful Example*, and of great force to oblige and provoke us to the imitation of it; for it is the Example of one whom we ought to reverence, and have reaſon to love, above any Perſon in the World: The Example of our Prince and Soveraign Lord, of our beſt Friend and greateſt Benefactor, of the High Prieſt of our Profeſſion, and the Captain of our Salvation, of the Author and Finiſher of our Faith, of one who came down from Heaven for our ſakes, and was contented to aſſume our Nature, together with the infirmities of it, and to live in a low and

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mean condition, for no other reason but that he might have the opportunity to instruct and lead Mankind in the way to Life, to deliver us from Sin and Wrath, and to bring us to God and Happiness. 'Tis the Example of one who laid down his Life for us, and sealed his Love to us in his Blood, and whilst we were Enemies, did and suffer'd more for us, than ever any Man did for his Friend.

And surely these Considerations cannot but mightily recommend and endear to us this *Example* of *our Lord and Saviour*. We are ambitious to imitate those whom we highly esteem and reverence, and are apt to have their Examples in great veneration, from whom we have received great Kindnesses and Benefits, and are always endeavouring to be like those whom we love, and are apt to conform our selves to the Will and Pleasure of those from whom we have received great Favours, and who are continually heaping great Obligations upon us.

So that whether we consider the Excellency of our Pattern, or the mighty Endearments of it to us, by that infinite Love and Kindness which he hath expre-

expreſt towards us, we have all the temptation, and all the provocation in the World, to endeavour to be like him; for who would not gladly tread in the ſteps of *the Son of God*, and of the beſt Friend that the Sons of Men ever had? Who would not follow *that Example* to which we ſtand indebted for the greateſt Bleſſings and Benefits that ever were procured for Mankind? Thus you ſee of what force and advantage the *Example* of our bleſſed Saviour is toward the Recovery and Salvation of Mankind. Vol. V.

3*dly*, He is *the Author of Eternal Salvation*, as he hath purchaſed it for us, by the *Merit of his Obedience and Sufferings*, by which he hath obtained Eternal Redemption for us; not only deliverance from the wrath to come, but Eternal Life and Happineſs, when by our Sins we had juſtly incurred the wrath and diſpleaſure of Almighty God, and were liable to Eternal Death and Miſery. He was contented to be ſubſtituted a Sacrifice for us, *to bear our Sins in his own Body on the Tree*, and to expiate the guilt of all our Offences by his own Sufferings. He died *for us*, that is, not only for our Benefit and Advantage, but in our place and ſtead; ſo that if he had

not died, we had eternally perriſh'd; and becauſe he died, we are ſaved from that eternal Ruine and Puniſhment, which was due to us for our Sins.

And this, tho' it be no where in Scripture call'd by the Name or Term of *Satisfaction*, yet, which is the ſame thing in effect, it is call'd *the price of our Redemption*; for as we are Sinners, we are liable and indebted to the Juſtice of God, and our Bleſſed Saviour by his Death and Sufferings hath diſcharged this Obligation; which Diſcharge, ſince it was obtained for us by *the ſhedding of his precious Blood, without which*, the Scripture expreſly ſays, *there had been no Remiſſion of Sin*, why it may not properly enough be called *Payment* and *Satisfaction*, I confeſs I cannot underſtand. Not that God was angry with his Son, for he was always well pleaſed with him; or that our Saviour ſuffer'd the very ſame which the Sinner ſhould have done in his own Perſon, the proper Pains and Torments of the damned: but that his perfect Obedience and grievous Sufferings, undergone for our ſakes, and upon our account, were of that Value and Eſteem with God, and his voluntary Sacrifice of himſelf in our ſtead, ſo highly

highly acceptable and well pleaſing to him, that he thereupon was pleaſed to enter into a Covenant of Grace and Mercy with Mankind; wherein he hath promiſed and engaged himſelf to forgive the Sins of all thoſe who ſincerely repent and believe, and to make them partakers of Eternal Life. And hence it is, that the Blood of Chriſt, which was ſhed for us upon the Croſs, is call'd *the Blood of the Covenant*; as being the Sanction of that new Covenant of the Goſpel, into which God is entred with Mankind; and not only the Confirmation, but the very Foundation of it; for which reaſon, the Cup in the Lord's Supper, (which repreſents to us the Blood of Chriſt) is call'd *the New Teſtament in his Blood, which was ſhed for many for the remiſſion of Sins.*

4*thly*, and *laſtly*, Chriſt is ſaid to be *the Author of our Salvation*, in reſpect of his powerful and perpetual *Interceſſion* for us at the right Hand of God. And this ſeems to be more eſpecially intimated and intended, in that Expreſſion here in the Text, that *being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal Salvation to them that obey him.* Which Words of *his being perfected*, do, as I have ſhew'd

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before, more immediately refer to his Sufferings, and the Reward that followed them, *his Exaltation at the right hand of God*, where *he lives for ever to make Intercession for us*; by which perpetual and most prevalent *Intercession* of his, he procures all those Benefits to be bestowed upon us, which he purchased for us by his Death; the forgiveness of our Sins, and our Acceptance with God, and perfect Restitution to his Favour, upon our Faith and Repentance, and the Grace and Assistance of God's Holy Spirit to inable us to a sincere Discharge of our Duty, to strengthen us against all the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, to keep us from all Evil, and to preserve us to his Heavenly Kingdom.

And this is that which our Apostle calls, *obtaining of Mercy, and finding Grace to help in time of need*, ch. 4. v. 16. of this Epist. Our blessed Saviour, now that he is advanced into Heaven, and *exalted on the right hand of the Majesty on high*, doth out of the tenderest Affection and Compassion to Mankind, still prosecute that great and merciful Design of our Salvation, which was begun by him here on Earth, and in Virtue of his meritorious

ritorious Obedience and Sufferings does offer up our Prayers to God, and as it were plead our Cause with God, and represent to him all our Wants and Necessities, and obtain a favourable Answer of our Petitions put up to God in his Name, and all necessary supplies of Grace and Strength, Proportionable to our Temptations and Infirmities.

And by Virtue of this powerful *Intercession* of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer, our Sins are pardoned upon our sincere Repentance, our Prayers are graciously answered, our Wants are abundantly supplyed, and the Grace and Assistance of God's Spirit are plentifully afforded to us, to excite us to our Duty, to strengthen us in well doing, to comfort us in Afflictions, to support us under the greatest Tryals and Sufferings, and *to keep us through Faith unto Salvation.*

And for this reason, as the purchasing of our Salvation is in Scripture attributed to the Death and Sufferings of Christ; so the perfecting and finishing of it is ascribed to the prevalency of his Intercession at the right Hand of God for us. So the Apostle tells us, *ch.* 7. *v.* 25. That *he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come to God by him; seeing he ever liveth*

Vol. V. *liveth to make Intercession for us.* He dyed once to purchase Salvation for us; and that we may not fall short of it, but receive the full Benefit of this Purchase, *he lives for ever to make Intercession for us*; and thus *he saves to the uttermost all those that come to God by him*; that is, he takes care of the whole business of our Salvation from first to last. And now that he is in Heaven, he is as intent to procure our Welfare and Happiness, and as tenderly concerned for us, as when he lived here among us upon Earth, as when he hung upon the Cross, and *poured out his Soul an Offering for our Sins*; for he appears at the right Hand of God in our Nature, that which he assumed for our sakes, which was made subject to, and sensible of our Infirmities, and which *was tempted in all things like as we are, only without Sin*; and therefore *he knows how to pity* and succour *them that are tempted*; and from the remembrance of his own Sufferings, is prompted to a compassionate Sense of ours, and never ceaseth in virtue of his Blood, which was shed for us, to plead our Cause with God, and to intercede powerfully on our behalf.

So that the Virtue and Efficacy of Christ's

Chriſt's *Interceſſion* on our behalf, is founded in the Redemption, which he wrought for us, by his Blood and Sufferings; which, being entred into Heaven, he repreſents to God on our Behalf. As the high Prieſt under the Law did enter into the holy place, with the Blood of the Sacrifices that had been offered, and in virtue of that Blood, interceded for the People: *So Chriſt by his own Blood entred into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us*; as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *ch.* 9. *v.* 12. He entred into *the Holy Place*, that is *into Heaven it ſelf*, to make *Interceſſion* for us, as the Apoſtle explains himſelf, *v.* 24. *Chriſt is not entred into the holy places which are made with hands*; *but into Heaven it ſelf, to appear in the preſence of God for us.* And *ch.* 10. *v.* 12. ſpeaking of Chriſt's appearing for us at the right Hand of God, *this Man* (ſays he) *after he had offer'd one Sacrifice for Sin for ever* (that is, a Sacrifice of perpetual Virtue and Efficacy) *ſat down at the right Hand of God*, that is to intercede for us in virtue of that Sacrifice. Vol. V.

From all which it appears, that the Virtue of Chriſt's Mediation and Interceſſion for us in Heaven, is founded in his

his Sacrifice, and the price of our Redemption which he paid on Earth, in ſhedding his Blood for us.

From whence the Apoſtle reaſons, that *there is but one Mediator between God and Men*, by whom we are to addreſs our Prayers to God; 1 Tim. 2. 5. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a Ranſome for all.* His Mediation is founded in his Ranſome, or the Price which he paid for our Redemption. The Apoſtle indeed does not ſay there is *but one Mediator* between God and Man in expreſs words, but ſurely he means ſo; if by ſaying *there is one God*, he means there is *but one God*; for they are joined together, and the very ſame Expreſſion uſed concerning both; *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men*: that is, there is *but one God*, and *one Mediator*. But then, they of the Church of *Rome* endeavour to avoid this plain Text, by diſtinguiſhing between a *Mediator* of *Redemption*, and a *Mediator* of *Interceſſion*: But now if Chriſt's *Mediation*, by way of *Interceſſion*, be founded in the Virtue of his *Redemption*; then if there be but *one Mediator* of *Redemption*, then there is but *one Mediator* of *Interceſſion*

ceſſion in Heaven for us. *There is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a Ranſom for all.* So that the Power and Prevalency of his *Interceſſion* is founded in his *Ranſome*, that is, *the Price of our Redemption*; in virtue whereof alone he intercedes with God for us, as the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* does moſt plainly aſſert. So that all other Interceſſors in Heaven for us, are excluded from offering and preſenting our Prayers to God, beſides *our High Prieſt, who is at the right hand of God, and lives for ever, to make interceſſion for us*, and by virtue of his *Interceſſion, is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to God by him*, that is, who put up their Prayers to God in the alone Virtue of his *Mediation*. So that as there is no need of any other, if his *Interceſſion* be available *to ſave to the uttermoſt*: So there is great danger in applying to any other (whether Saint or Angel, or even the Bleſſed Virgin,) if the benefit of his *Interceſſion* be limited to thoſe *who come to God by him*. And thus I have ſhewn by what means Chriſt is *the Author of our Salvation*; which was the *firſt* thing I propos'd to be conſider'd. I proceed to the

Second

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Second thing I propoſed to enquire into; namely, what *Obedience* the Goſpel requires as a Condition, and is pleaſed to accept as a Qualification in thoſe who hope for *Eternal Salvation*. And this I ſhall explain, firſt *Negatively*, and then *Poſitively*.

1*ſt*, *Negatively*; It is not a mere outward profeſſion of the *Chriſtian Religion*, and owning of Chriſt for our Lord and Law-giver, that will be accepted in this caſe. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord,* (ſaith our Saviour) *ſhall enter into the Kingdom of God.* By which we may very reaſonably underſtand, all that profeſſion of Religion, which falls ſhort of *Obedience* and a *Holy Life*; as the profeſſion of Faith in Chriſt, being baptized into his Name and Religion, the mere Belief of his Doctrine, and the owning of him for our Lord and Saviour; no, nor the external Worſhip of him, and profeſſion of Subjection to him, by Prayer and hearing his Word, and communicating in the Holy Sacrament. No, though this be ſet off in the moſt glorious manner, by propheſying and working Miracles in his Name; for ſo it follows in the next words, *Many ſhall ſay to me in that day, Lord,*

Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name, and in thy Name have caſt out Devils, and in thy Name have done many wondrous works. We have eat and drank in thy preſence, and have heard thee preach in our Streets. But he tells us, that nothing of all this, without Obedience to his Laws, will be ſufficient to gain us admiſſion into Heaven. Vol. V.

2*dly*, *Poſitively*; That which God requires as a Condition, and will accept as a Qualification in thoſe who hope for Eternal Life, is Faith in Chriſt, and a ſincere and univerſal Obedience to the Precepts of his Holy Goſpel. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of God: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* And here in the Text it is expreſly ſaid, That *Chriſt is the Author of Eternal Salvation to them that obey him*, τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ, to them that hearken to him; that is, to them that do ſo hear and believe his Goſpel, as to obey it; to them, and no other, he is *the Author of Eternal Salvation.*

And that we may the more clearly and diſtinctly underſtand what *Obedience* it is, which the Goſpel exacts as an indiſpenſable Condition of *Eternal Salvation*,

tion, and a neceſſary qualification in all thoſe who hope to be made partakers of it; we may be pleaſed to conſider, that there is a *virtual* and an *actual* Obedience to the Laws of God; a *perfect* and a *ſincere* Obedience to them; the explication of theſe Terms, will give us a diſtinct conception of the thing we are ſpeaking of.

1*ſt*, There is a *virtual*, and there is an *actual* Obedience to the Laws of God. By an *actual* Obedience, I mean the Practice and Exerciſe of the ſeveral Graces and Virtues of Chriſtianity, in the courſe and tenour of a holy Life; when *out of a good Converſation Men do ſhew forth their Works*, and by the outward actions of their Lives, do give real Teſtimony of their Piety, Juſtice, Sobriety, Humility, Meekneſs, and Charity, and all other Chriſtian Graces and Virtues, as occaſion is miniſtred for the Practice and Exerciſe of them.

By a *virtual* Obedience, I mean a ſincere belief of the Goſpel, of the Holineſs and Equity of its Precepts, of the Truth of its Promiſes, and of the Terror of its Threatnings, and a true Repentance for all our Sins. This is Obedience in the Root and Principle; for he who

who ſincerely believes the Goſpel, and does truly repent of the Errors and Miſcarriages of his Life, is firmly reſolved to obey the Commandments of God, and to walk before him, in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs all the days of his Life; ſo that there is nothing that prevents or hinders this Man's *actual* Obedience to the Laws of God, in the courſe of a holy and good Life, but only the want of time and opportunity for it. And this was the caſe of thoſe, who, upon the hearing of the Goſpel when it was firſt preached to them, did heartily embrace it, and turn from their Sins, and the Worſhip of Idols, to the true and and living God, but perhaps were cut off ſoon after; (as there were many, who being but newly gained to Chriſtianity, were preſently put to Death, and ſuffer'd Martyrdom for that Profeſſion;) There is no doubt to be made, but that in this caſe, a *virtual* Obedience was in ſuch Perſons a ſufficient qualification for Eternal Life.

But where there is time and opportunity for the Exerciſe of our Obedience, and the practice of the virtues of a holy Life, there *actual* Obedience to the Laws and Precepts of the Goſpel, is neceſſary to qualifie us for Eternal Happineſs;

pineſs; ſo that tho' a man do ſincerely believe the Goſpel, and truly repent of his Sins, and reſolve upon a better Life; yet if he do not afterwards in the courſe of his Life put this reſolution in practice, and *bring forth fruits meet for Repentance, and amendment of Life*, and perſevere in a Holy Courſe, his firſt Reſolution of Obedience, though it were ſincere, will not avail him to Salvation. Nay, if he ſhould continue for ſome time in the Reſolution and Practice of a holy and virtuous Life, and afterwards fall off from it, and *turn from the holy Commandment deliver'd unto him, his latter end would be worſe than his beginning; all his righteouſneſs that he hath done would not be remember'd; he ſhould die in his iniquity.* For *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. If any man draw back, God's Soul will have no pleaſure in him.* This is ſo very clear and plain from Scripture, that no Man can entertain a contrary perſwaſion, without contradicting the whole tenor of the Bible.

The Sum of what I have ſaid is this, that a *virtual* Obedience, and *ſincere* Faith and Repentance are ſufficient, where there is no time and opportunity for *actual* Obedience and the practice of a holy

holy Life: but where there is opportunity for *actual* Obedience, and the continued practice of a good Life, and perseverance therein; they are indispensably necessary in order to our *Eternal Salvation*, and a well-grounded hope and assurance of it. Vol. V.

2*dly*, There is a *perfect*, and there is a *sincere* Obedience. *Perfect* Obedience consists in the exact Conformity of our hearts and lives to the Law of God, without the least imperfection, and without failing in any point or degree of our Duty. And this Obedience, as it is not consistent with the frailty and infirmity of corrupt Nature, and the imperfection of our present State, so neither doth God require it of us as a necessary Condition of Eternal Life. We are indeed commanded to be *perfect, as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*: But we are not to understand this strictly and rigorously; for that is not only impossible to Men in this present State of Imperfection, but absolutely impossible to Humane Nature, for *Men to be perfect, as God is perfect*: but the plain meaning of this Precept is, that we should imitate those Divine Perfections of Goodness, and Mercy, and Patience, and Purity,

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rity, and endeavour to be as like God in all these as we can, and be still aspiring after a nearer resemblance of him, as may be evident to any one who considers the connexion and occasion of these words.

By a *sincere* Obedience I mean such a conformity of our lives and actions to the Law of God, as to the general course and tenour of them, that we do not live in the habitual practice of any known Sin, or in the customary neglect of any material and considerable part of our known Duty; and that we be not wilfully and deliberately guilty of the single act of heinous and notorious Sins, as I have formerly explained this matter more at large, in another Discourse. And this Obedience, even in the best of Men, is mixt with great Frailty and Imperfection; but yet because it is the utmost that we can do in this State of Infirmity and Imperfection, the terms of the Gospel are so merciful and gracious, as that God is pleased for the sake of the meritorious Obedience and Sufferings of our Blessed Saviour, to accept this *sincere*, though *imperfect* Obedience, and to reward it with Eternal Life. And this, I doubt not,

not, after all the intricate disputes, and infinite Controversies about this business, is the true and clear state of this matter. Vol. V.

And this *sincere* Obedience which the Gospel requires of us, as a Condition of our Happiness, though it be sometimes called by Divines, *Evangelical Perfection*; yet it is but very improperly so called; for nothing is properly perfect to which any thing is wanting; and great defects and imperfections must needs be acknowledged in the Obedience of the best and holiest Men upon Earth; and they who pretend to *Perfection* in this Life, do neither understand the Law of God, nor themselves, but (as St. *John* says of such Persons) *they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them*; and besides other Imperfections, these two are evident in them, *Ignorance* and *Pride*.

And thus much may suffice to have spoken to this *second* Particular, namely, what Obedience the Gospel requires as a Condition, and is pleased to accept as a Qualification for Eternal Life.

SERMON VII.

The Possibility and Necessity of Gospel Obedience, and its consistence with free Grace.

HEB. V. 9.

And being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him.

FOR the Explication of these Words, I propos'd to consider these *Five* Things.

1*st*. How, and by what Means Christ is the Author of our Salvation.

2*dly*, What Obedience the Gospel requires as a Condition, and is pleased to accept as a Qualification, in those who hope for eternal Salvation.

3*dly*, The Possibility of our performing this Condition, by that Grace and

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Assistance which is offer'd, and ready to be afforded to us by the Gospel.

4*thly*, The Necessity of this Obedience, in order to eternal Life and Happiness.

5*thly*, The Consistency of this method and means of our Salvation with the Law of Faith, and the free Grace and Mercy of God declared in the Gospel.

I have handled the *Two* first of these, and now proceed to the

Third Thing I propos'd to consider, *viz.* The possibility of our performing this Condition, by that Grace and Assistance which is offer'd and ready to be afforded to us by the Gospel. For if Christ be *the Author of eternal Salvation only to those who obey him*; then those who live in disobedience to the Gospel, are in a state of Damnation. But there cannot be the guilt of Disobedience, where Obedience is impossible; no Man being guilty, or justly liable to Punishment, for the not doing of that, which it was no ways possible for him to do. Therefore the Covenant of the Gospel, into which God is entred with Mankind, doth necessarily suppose the possibility of performing the Condition of it; otherwise it leaves them in as bad a Condition as they were in before, because it only offers

fers new Bleſſings and Benefits to us, but ſets us never the nearer the obtaining of them, if ſo be the Condition upon which they are granted be altogether impoſſible to us; nay it renders our State many degrees worſe, if our not performing the Condition of ſuch gracious Offers bring us under new and greater guilt.

If it be ſaid, that ſome few Perſons have great Benefit by it, becauſe they by an eſpecial and effectual Grace ſhall be enabled to perform the Conditions of this Covenant; is not this a mighty ſtraitning to the Grace and Mercy of the Goſpel, to confine it within ſo narrow a compaſs, as ſtill to leave the greateſt part of Mankind in a worſe Condition, than if Salvation had never been offer'd to them? As it certainly does, if (as this Doctrine does neceſſarily ſuppoſe) the Guilt and Puniſhment of Men ſhall be greatly increaſed and heightned by their Contempt of, and Diſobedience to the Goſpel; when at the ſame time it is acknowledged, that it was not poſſible for thoſe Men to obey it, for want of that ſpecial and effectual Grace, which is neceſſary to enable them thereto. I do not love to handle theſe Points contentiouſly, but this

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this in my Apprehension does as much derogate from the Amplitude and Riches of God's Grace in the Gospel, as any thing that can easily be said.

And therefore, for the right stating and clearing of this Matter, I shall endeavour to make out these *Three* Things.

1. That we are not sufficient of our selves, and by any power in us, to perform the Condition of the Gospel.

2. That the Grace of God is ready to enable and assist us to the Performance of these Conditions, if we be not wanting to our selves.

3. That what the Grace of God is ready to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to our selves, that may properly be said to be possible to us, and, in some sense, in our Power.

1. That we are not sufficient of our selves, and by any Power in us, to perform the Condition of the Gospel. The Grace of God doth clearly appear in the whole business of our Salvation: *By Grace ye are saved* (says the Apostle) *and that not of your selves, it is the Gift of God.* Faith is the Gift of God, and so is Repentance. *It is God that works in us both to will and to do of his own goodness*; that is, who both enclines and excites us to that

that which is good, and enables us to do it. *Without me* (ſays Chriſt) *ye can do nothing.* And *through Chriſt ſtrengthning me* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *I am able to do all things*; all things which God requires of us, and expects to be done by us in order to our Salvation. Without the Grace of Chriſt, *we are without ſtrength*; *and are not ſufficient of our ſelves, as of our ſelves, to think a good thought*; that is, we are not ſufficient of our ſelves to deſign or reſolve upon any thing that is good; *but our ſufficiency is of God.*

The Depravation of our Nature hath brought a great Impotency and Diſability upon us to that which is good; and we have made our ſelves much weaker by evil Practice; by the Power of evil Habits, we are enſlaved to our Luſts, and *ſold under Sin.* So that if at any time we are convinced of our Duty, and from that Conviction have an Inclination to that which is good, *evil is preſent to us.* When the Law of God gives us the knowledge of our Duty, and ſtares our Conſciences in the Face, *there is another Law in our Members, warring againſt the Law of our Minds, and bringing us into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in our Members.* Sin brings us under the

Power

Vol. V. Power of *Satan*, and gives him dominion over us. *For his Servants ye are whom ye obey*; so that he rules and bears sway in us, and *we are led Captive by him at his pleasure.* Evil and vicious Habits are a kind of second Nature super-induced upon us, which takes away our Power and Liberty to that which is good, and renders it impossible to us to raise and rescue our selves; so that *we are Prisoners and Captives*, 'till *the Son of God set us free*; *and dead in Trespasses and Sins*,' till *he give us Life.* And therefore the Prophet represents the Recovery of our selves from the Bondage of Sin, by such things as are naturally impossible, to shew how great our Weakness and Impotency is; *Jer.* 13. 23. *Can the Ethiopian cleanse his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? Then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil.* And by how much stronger the Chains of our Sins are, and the more unable we are to break loose from them; by so much the greater and more evident is the necessity of the Divine Assistance, and of the Power of God's Grace, to knock off those Fetters, and to rescue us from this Bondage and Slavery.

2. The Grace of God is ready to assist and enable us to the Performance of these

theſe Conditions, that is, to Faith and Repentance, and all the purpoſes of Obedience and a Holy Life; if we be not wanting to our ſelves, and do not reject or neglect to make uſe of that Grace, which God offers us, and is ready to afford to us in a very plentiful Manner. And this is that which renders all the Mercies of the Goſpel effectual (if it be not our own Fault, and wilful Neglect) to the great End and Deſign of our Salvation; and without this all the gracious offers of the Goſpel would ſignifie nothing at all to our Advantage.

And this likewiſe is that which renders the Unbelief and Impenitency and Diſobedience of Men utterly inexcuſable; becauſe nothing of all this does proceed from want of Power, but of Will to do better. And therefore this is ſo neceſſary an Encouragement to all the endeavours of Obedience and a good Life, that Men ſhould be aſſured of God's readineſs to aſſiſt and help them in the doing of their duty, that without this the revelation of the Goſpel, though never ſo clear, would ſignifie nothing to us, all the Precepts and Directions for a good Life, and the moſt vehement Perſwaſions and Exhortations to Obedience, would have no Force and Life in them; for what

ſigni-

signifies it to direct the dead, and speak to them that cannot hear, and to perswade Men, tho' it were with all the earnestness in the World, to those things which it is impossible for them to do.

Therefore our blessed Saviour, when he had laid down, and explained the Precepts of Holiness and Virtue, in his Sermon upon the Mount, to encourage them to what he had been directing and proposing to them, he assures them that God is ready to afford his Grace and Assistance to all those that are sincerely desirous to do his Will, and do earnestly implore his Grace and Assistance to that purpose, *Matth.* 7. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. *Ask*, (saith he) *and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.* So that if any Man want the Grace and Assistance of God's holy Spirit, it is his own fault; it is either for want of seeking, or for want of earnestness in asking; for our Saviour expresly assures us, that he denies it to none; *for every one that asketh, receiveth.*

And to give us a more lively and sensible Assurance of this, he represents the care and kindness of God to Men, by the Affections of earthly Parents to their

Children,

Children, who tho' they be many times evil themselves, yet are not wont to deny their Children necessary good things, when they decently and dutifully beg them at their Hands; *What Man is there of you, whom if his Son ask Bread, will he give him a Stone? Or if he ask a Fish, will he give him a Serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven, give good things to them that ask him?* Here is a general Promise and Declaration, that upon our humble and earnest Prayer to God, he will grant us whatever is good and necessary, by which is certainly intended in the first place, Spiritual good Things, because these are the best and most necessary; and to satisfie us that our Saviour did in the first place, and more especially mean these, St. *Luke* does particularly instance in the Grace and Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, *Luke* 11. 13. *How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him? The holy Spirit*, that is, the continual Presence and Influence of it to all the purposes of Guidance and Direction, of Grace and Assistance, of Comfort and Support in our Christian Course.

And what else is the meaning of that Parable

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Parable of our Saviour's concerning the *Talents* entrusted with every Man, according to his Capacity and Opportunities, *Matth.* 25, I say, what else can be the meaning of it but this? That God is before-hand with every Man, by affording the Advantages and Oportunities of being happy, and such a measure of Grace and Assistance to that end, which if he faithfully improve, he shall be admitted *into the Joy of his Lord.*

And upon this Consideration of the gracious Promises of the Gospel to this purpose, it is, that the Apostle St. *Paul* doth so earnestly exhort Christians to endeavour after the highest Degree of universal Holiness and Purity, that we are capable of in this Life; 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. *Having therefore these Promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, perfecting Holiness in the fear of God.* And so likewise *Phil.* 2. 12, 13. *Wherefore, my beloved, work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling* (that is, with great Care and Concernment, lest you should fall short of it) *for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* The Consideration of God's readiness to assist us, and of his Grace which is always at hand to stir up our Wills to that which is

is good, and to ſtrengthen us in the doing of it, ought to be a great Argument and Encouragement to us, to put forth our utmoſt Endeavours, and ſo co-operate with the Grace of God toward our own Salvation. Vol. V.

And the Apoſtle St. *Peter* uſeth the ſame Argument to preſs Men to uſe their utmoſt *Diligence, to make their calling and election ſure*, by abounding in all the Virtues of a good Life; 2 *Pet.* 1. 3, 4. *According as his Divine Power hath given us all things which pertain to Life and Godlineſs*, (that is, hath ſo plentifully furniſht us with all the requiſites to a godly Life) *through the knowledge of him that hath called us to Glory and Virtue*, (that is, by knowledge of the Goſpel and the Grace therein offered to us) *whereby he hath given unto us exceeding great and precious Promiſes, that by theſe ye might be Partakers of a Divine Nature, having eſcaped the Corruption that is in the World through Luſt.* And then from the conſideration of this Divine Power, conveyed to us by the Goſpel, and the Promiſes of it, he exhorts Men *to give all diligence, to add to their Faith Virtue, and Knowledge, and Temperance, and Patience, and Godlineſs, and brotherly Love, and Charity.*

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And indeed the Scripture every where ascribes our Regeneration and Sanctification, the Beginning, and Progress and Perseverance of our Obedience, to the powerful Grace and Assistance of God's holy Spirit; we are said to be *regenerate and born again of the Spirit*, to be *renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost*, to *be led by the Spirit*, and *by the Spirit to mortifie the deeds of the Flesh*, and, in a word, *to be kept by the mighty Power of God through Faith unto Salvation.*

3. What the Grace of God is ready to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to our selves, may properly be said to be possible to us, and in some sense in our Power. That may be said to be possible to us, which tho' we *cannot do of our selves, as of our selves*, (that is, by our own Natural Power) yet we can do by the Help and Assistance of another, if that Assistance be ready to be afforded to us; as we are sure the Grace of God's Holy Spirit is, because he hath promised it to them that seek it, and *he is faithful who hath promised.*

That cannot be said to be wholly out of a Man's Power, which he may have for asking; that which we are able to do by the Strength and Assistance of another

nother, is not impoſſible to us. Sure- St. *Paul*, did no ways derogate from e Grace of God, when he ſaid, *I am a- e to do all things thro' Chriſt ſtrengthen- g me*; he reckons himſelf able to do that, which by the ſtrength of Chriſt was enabled to do.

And this is the true Ground of all the rſwaſions and Exhortations, which we eet with in Scripture, to Holineſs and bedience, which would all be, not on- to no purpoſe, but very unreaſonable, we were wholly deſtitute of Power to what God commands: but if he be ways ready at hand to aſſiſt us by a ace ſufficient for us, if he co-operate th us in the Work of our Salvation, n is there abundant ground of Encou- gement to our Endeavours; and if fall ſhort of eternal Salvation, it is olly our own fault; it is not becauſe d is wanting to us in thoſe Aids and iſtances of his Grace which are neceſ- ; but becauſe we are wanting to our es, in not ſeeking God's Grace more neſtly, or by neglecting to make uſe when it is afforded to us. For it is re- all one, both to the encouragement of Endeavours, and to the rendring of Diſobedience inexcuſable, whether

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we be able of our ſelves to perform th
Condition of the Goſpel, or God be rea
to aſſiſt us by his Grace and Holy Sp
rit to that purpoſe.

Wherefore, as the Apoſtle exhor
Heb. 12. 12, 13, 14, 15. *Lift up*
hands which hang down, and the feeble k
and make ſtrait paths for your feet,
that which is lame be turned out of the
but let it rather be healed. Follow holi
without which no man ſhall ſee the L
looking diligently leſt any man fail of
Grace of God; intimating, that
want of care and diligence on our p
if the Grace of God fail of its end,
be not effectual to all the purpoſ
Faith, and Repentance, and Ob
ence. God does not with-hold
Grace from us: but Men may rec
it in vain, if they do not make uſe o
And thus I have done with the
thing I propoſed to conſider from t
words. I proceed to the

Fourth, viz. To conſider the N
ſity of this Obedience, in order to
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neſs. *Chriſt is the Author of Eterna*
vation to them that obey him; that
ſuch, and only to ſuch, as live in O
ence to the Precepts of his holy G

them who frame the general course their lives according to his Laws. ome Men seem to be so afraid of the erit of Obedience and good Works, at they are loth to assert the Necessity them, and do it with so much cau-on, as if they were not throughly per-aded of it, or did apprehend some ngerous consequence of it: but this r is perfectly groundless; as if Merit uld not be excluded, without casting our Duty, and releasing our selves m any Necessary Obligation to be od. For any Man surely may easily cern a plain difference between a rthiness of desert, and a fitness of eiving a Rebel, being penitent d sorry for what he hath done; ough he cannot deserve a pardon, yet may thereby be qualified and made t to receive it; though Repentance not make him worthy, yet it may ke him capable of it, which an ob-ate Rebel, and one that persists in disloyalty, is not. This is a thing lain of it self, that it would be te of time and words to insist longer n the proof of it.

Now the Necessity of Obedience, in

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order to eternal Life and Happineſs, lies upon theſe *three* grounds.

1*ſt*, Upon the Conſtitution and Appointment of God.

2*dly*, The general Reaſon of Rewards.

3*dly*, Upon the particular Nature of that Reward, which God will confer upon us for our Obedience.

1*ſt*, The Conſtitution and Appointment of God. *Eternal Life is the Gift of God*; and he may do what he will with his own, he may diſpenſe his Gifts and Favours upon what Terms and Conditions he pleaſeth; and therefore, if he hath plainly declared, that *to them by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality he will give eternal Life*; that *without holineſs, no Man ſhall ſee the Lord*; but *we have our fruit unto holineſs, our End ſhall be everlaſting Life*; who ſhall reſiſt his Will, or diſpute his Pleaſure? The Right and Authority of God in this matter is ſo unqueſtionable, that it admits of no conteſt; and the Bleſſings and Benefits propos'd, are ſo infinitely great and unvaluable, that no condition of obtaining them, which is poſſible to be perform'd by us, can

though

thought hard and unequal; ſo that we ought thankfully to receive ſo great a favour, let the terms and conditions of it be what they will; and if there were no other reaſon for the impoſing of theſe Conditions upon us, of Faith, and Repentance, and Obedience, but merely the Will and Pleaſure of God, this were enough to ſilence all Objections againſt it.

But 2*dly*, The Neceſſity of Obedience, in order to eternal Life, is likewiſe founded in the Reaſon of Rewards in general. For though the meaſure and degree of our Reward, ſo infinitely beyond the proportion of our beſt Duty and Service, as eternal Life and Happineſs is, I ſay, though the meaſure and degree of this Reward be founded in the immenſe Bounty and Goodneſs of God; yet the Reaſon of Reward in general, is neceſſarily founded in our Obedience to God's Laws; for according to the true nature and reaſon of things, nothing but Obedience is capable of Reward. For though Authority may pardon the breach and tranſgreſſion of Laws, and remit the puniſhment due thereto; yet to reward the contempt of Laws, and wilful diſobedience to them, is directly contrary

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to the deſign of Government, and does plainly overthrow the very Reaſon and End of all Laws, and makes Obedience and Diſobedience to be all one, if ſo be they are equally capable of Reward; and therefore nothing can be more abſurd and ſenſeleſs, than for any Man to hope to be rewarded by God, who does not live in a ſincere Obedience to his Laws. *Every man that hath this hope in him*, (that is, in Chriſt Jeſus, to be ſav'd by him) *purifieth himſelf, even as he is pure*; that is, endeavours to be like him in the purity and obedience of his life; and nothing ſurely can be more unreaſonable, than to expect to be rewarded by the great Governour and Judge of the World, if we be diſobedient to his Laws; for where Obedience to Law is refuſed, there all reaſon and equity of Reward ceaſeth. No wiſe Prince can think fit to reward Diſloyalty and Contempt of his Laws; becauſe to reward it, would be to encourage it; much leſs will God, the great and infinitely wiſe Governour of the World.

3*dly*, the Neceſſity of Obedience will yet more evidently appear, if we conſider the particular Nature of that Reward, which God will confer upon us for

for our Obedience. The happineſs of Heaven, which is the Reward promiſed in the Goſpel, is deſcribed to us by the ſight and enjoyment of God. Now to render us capable of this bleſſed Reward, it is neceſſary that we be like God; but nothing but Obedience and Holineſs, and *being renewed after the Image of him who created us in righteouſneſs*, can make us like to God. For he that would be like God muſt be holy, and juſt, and good, and patient, and merciful, as God is; and this alone can make us capable of the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of God; for unleſs *we be like him*, we cannot *ſee him as he is*, and if we ſhould be admitted into Heaven, we could not find any pleaſure and happineſs in communion with him. *Bleſſed are the pure in heart* (ſays our Saviour) *for they ſhall ſee God. Without Holineſs* (ſays the Apoſtle) *no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* And indeed, it is in the very nature of the thing impoſſible, that a wicked Man (whilſt he remains ſo) ſhould ever be happy, becauſe there can be no agreeable and delightful Society between thoſe that are of a quite contrary temper and diſpoſition to one another, between him *who is of purer eyes than*

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than to behold iniquity, and a ſinful and impure Creature. For *what fellowſhip* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *can righteouſneſs have with unrighteouſneſs? what communion hath light with darkneſs, or God with Belial?* that is, with the wicked and diſobedient. Till we become like to God in the frame and temper of our minds, there can be no happy Society between him and us; we could neither delight our ſelves in God, nor he take any pleaſure in us; for *he is not a God that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell with him. The wicked ſhall not ſtand in his ſight, he hateth all the workers of iniquity.* It cannot be otherwiſe, but that there muſt be an eternal jarring and diſcord between the righteous and holy God, and wicked and unrighteous Men. *I will behold thy face* (ſays *David*) *in righteouſneſs.* There is no looking God in the face, upon any other terms. If we have been *workers of iniquity* God will caſt us out of his ſight, and in great anger bid us to *depart from him*; and we alſo ſhall deſire him to *depart from us*, as being unable to bear the ſight of him.

So that there is great reaſon why Holineſs and Obedience ſhould be made the Conditions of Eternal Life and Happineſs,

pineſs, ſince in the very Nature of the thing it is ſo neceſſary a Qualification for the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of God, who is the Cauſe and Fountain of Happineſs. I come in the

Fifth and laſt place, To ſhew that this Method and Means of our Salvation, is no prejudice to the Law of Faith, and to the free Grace and Mercy of God declared in the Goſpel. The Goſpel is called *the Law of Faith*, and *the Law of Grace*, in oppoſition to the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation, which is called *the Law*, or *Covenant of Works*, becauſe it conſiſted ſo much in external Rites and Obſervances, which were but *types and ſhadows of good things to come*, (as the Apoſtle calls them in this Epiſtle;) and which, when they were come, that Law did expire of it ſelf, and was out of date, the obligation and obſervance of it was no longer neceſſary; but *a better Covenant*, which was *eſtabliſh'd upon better Promiſes*, came in the place of it, and Men were *juſtified by Faith*, that is, by ſincerely embracing the Chriſtian Religion, and were no longer under an obligation to that external, and ſervile, and imperfect Diſpenſation, which conſiſted in Circumciſion, and

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in almoſt an endleſs number of external Ceremonies. Theſe are *the works of the Law* ſo often ſpoken of by St. *Paul*, concerning which, the *Jews* had not only an opinion of the neceſſity of them, to a Man's Juſtification and Salvation, but likewiſe of the Merit of them; in oppoſition to both which opinions, St. *Paul* calls the Covenant of the Goſpel, *the Law of Faith*, and *the Law of Grace*.

But there is no where the leaſt intimation given, either by our Saviour, or his Apoſtles, that Obedience to the Precepts of the Goſpel (which are in ſubſtance the Moral Law cleared and perfected) is not neceſſary to our acceptance with God, and the obtaining of Eternal Life; but on the contrary, 'tis our Saviour's expreſs Direction to the young Man, who ask'd, *what good thing he ſhould do, that he might obtain Eternal Life*; *If thou wilt* (ſays he) *enter into Life, keep the Commandments*; and that he might underſtand what Commandments he meant, he inſtanceth in the Precepts of the Moral Law. And indeed, the whole tenour of our Saviour's Sermons, and the Precepts and Writings of the Apoſtles, are full and expreſs to this purpoſe.

poſe." *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine* (that is, theſe Precepts which I have delivered) *and doth them not, I will liken him to a fooliſh man, who built his houſe upon the ſand, and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. If ye know theſe things, happy are ye, if ye do them. In every Nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of him. In Jeſus Chriſt neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncircumciſion; but Faith, that is acted and inſpired by Charity.* And that the Apoſtle here means, *that Charity*, or *Love*, which is *the fulfilling of the Law*, is evident from what he ſays elſewhere; *that neither Circumciſion availeth any thing, nor Uncircumciſion; but the keeping of the Commandments of God*; In which Text it is plain, that the Apoſtle ſpeaks of the terms of our Juſtification, and what is available with God to that purpoſe. And St. *James* to the ſame purpoſe, tells us, that *by* the *works* of

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of *Obedience our Faith is made perfect*, and that *Faith without Works is dead*; and ſurely a dead Faith will neither juſtifie nor ſave any Man. St. *John* likewiſe very earneſtly cautions us to take heed of any ſuch Doctrine, as would take away the neceſſity of Righteouſneſs and Obedience; *Little Children* (ſays he) *let no man deceive you, he that doth Righteouſneſs is righteous, as he is righteous.* To all which, I ſhall only add the plain words of my Text, that *Chriſt became the Author of eternal Salvation to them that obey him.*

So that no Man hath reaſon to fear, that this Doctrine of the neceſſity of Obedience to our Acceptance with God, and the obtaining of eternal life, ſhould be any ways prejudicial to the Law of Faith, and the Law of Grace. For ſo long as theſe *three* things are but aſſerted and ſecured,

1*ſt.* That Faith is the Root and Principle of Obedience and a holy Life, and that *without it, it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.*

2*dly*, That we ſtand continually in need of the Divine Grace and Aſſiſtance, to enable us to perform that Obedience, which the Goſpel requires of us, and is pleaſed to accept in order to eternal life. And,

3*dly*, That

3*dly*, That the forgiveneſs of our Sins, and the Reward of eternal Life, are founded in the free Grace and Mercy of God, conferring theſe Bleſſings upon us, not for the merit of our Obedience, but only for the merit and ſatisfaction of the Obedience and Sufferings of our bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer; I ſay, ſo long as we aſſert theſe *three* things, we give all that the Goſpel any where aſcribes to Faith, and to the Grace of God revealed in the Goſpel.

I have been careful to expreſs theſe things more fully and diſtinctly, that no Man may imagine, that whilſt we aſſert the Neceſſity of Obedience and a Holy Life, we have any deſign to derogate in the leaſt from the Faith and the Grace of God; but only to engage and encourage Men to Holineſs and a good Life, by convincing them of the abſolute and indiſpenſable neceſſity of it, in order to eternal Salvation. For all that I have ſaid, is in plain Engliſh no more but this, that it is neceſſary for a Man to be a good Man, that he may get to Heaven; and whoever finds fault with this Doctrine, finds fault with the Goſpel it ſelf, and the main end and deſign of the Grace of God therein revealed to Mankind, which

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which offers Salvation to Men upon no other terms than theſe which I have mentioned; and to preach and preſs this Doctrine, is certainly, if any thing in the World can be ſo, to purſue the great End and Deſign of the Chriſtian Religion, ſo plainly and expreſly declared by St. *Paul*, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12. *The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* And if the Grace of God declared in the Goſpel, have this effect upon us, then we may with Confidence *wait for the bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who gave himſelf for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purifie to himſelf a peculiar People zealous of good works*; and then he adds, *theſe things teach, and exhort, and rebuke with all Authority*; that is, declare and inculcate this Doctrine, and rebuke ſeverely thoſe who teach or practiſe contrary to it. And he repeats it again with a more vehement Charge to *Titus*, to preſs upon Men the neceſſity of Obedience and good Works, *Chap.* 3. 8. *This is is a faithful ſaying, and theſe things I will that thou affirm conſtantly, that they who have believ-*

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ed in God, be careful to maintain good Works.

All that now remains, is to make ſome uſeful Inferences from what hath been ſaid upon this Argument, and ſo to conclude this Diſcourſe.

Firſt of all, To convince us that an empty Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion, how ſpecious and glorious ſoever it be, if it be deſtitute of the fruits of Obedience and a holy Life, will by no means avail to bring us to Heaven. No profeſſion of Faith in Chriſt, no Subjection to him, tho' we be baptized in his Name, and liſt our ſelves in the number of his Diſciples and Followers, tho' we have made a conſtant Profeſſion of all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and have performed all the external parts and duties of Religion, have gone conſtantly to Church, and frequented the Service of God, and have joined in publick Prayers to God with great appearance of Devotion, and have heard his Word with great Reverence and Attention, and received the bleſſed Sacrament with all imaginable expreſſions of Love and Gratitude to our bleſſed Redeemer; nay, tho' we had *heard* our bleſſed Saviour himſelf *teach in our ſtreets*, and *had eaten and drunken in his preſence*; yet if all this while *we have not*

Vol. V. *done the will of God*, and obeyed his Laws, none of all these will things signifie any thing to bring us to Heaven, and make us Partakers of that Salvation, which he hath purchased for Mankind.

But we cannot plead so much for our selves, as those did, of whom our Saviour speaks. None of us shall be able to alledge for our selves at the great day, that *we had propheſyed in his Name, and in his name had cast out Devils, and in his name had done many wonderful Works*; and yet if we could alledge all this, it would do us no good. All that such can say for themselves is, that *they have call'd him Lord, Lord*, that is, they have made profession of his Religion, and been call'd by his Name, that they have paid an outward Honour and Respect to him, and declared a mighty Love and Affection for him; but *they have not done his will*, but *have hated to be reformed, and have cast his Commandments behind their backs*, they have only born the Leaves of an outward Profession, but *have brought forth no fruit unto Holineſs*, and therefore can have no reasonable expectation, that *their End should be everlasting Life*. So that when these Men shall appear before the great and terrible Judge of the World,

World, they ſhall have nothing to ſay, but thoſe vain Words, *Lord, Lord*; to which our Saviour will anſwer in that Day, *why call ye me Lord, Lord, when ye would not do the things which I ſaid?* Notwithſtanding all your profeſſion of Faith in me, and ſubjection to me, *ye have been workers of Iniquity, therefore depart from me, I know ye not whence ye are.*

Secondly, The Conſideration of what hath been ſaid ſhould ſtir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of what the Author of our Salvation hath done for us; and there is great reaſon for thankfulneſs, whether we conſider the greatneſs of the Benefit conferred upon us, or the way and manner in which it was purchaſed, or the eaſie and reaſonable terms upon which it may be obtained.

1*ſt*, If we conſider the greatneſs of the Benefit conferred upon us, and that is Salvation, *eternal Salvation*, which comprehends in it all the Bleſſings and Benefits of the Goſpel, both the Means and the End, our Happineſs, and the Way to it, by *ſaving us from our Sins*; from the guilt of them, by our Juſtification in the Blood of Chriſt; and from the Power and Dominion of them, by the ſanctifying grace and virtue of the Holy Ghoſt.

And it comprehends the End, our Deliverance from Hell and the Wrath to come, and the bestowing of Happiness upon us, a great and lasting Happiness, great as our Wishes, and immortal as our Souls; all this is comprehended in *eternal Salvation.*

2*dly*, If we consider the way and manner in which this great Benefit was purchased and procured for us; in a way of infinite Kindness and Condescension, in the lowest Humiliation, and the unparallel'd Sufferings of the Son of God; for *never was there any sorrow like unto his sorrow, wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the day of his fierce Anger*; in his *taking upon him the form of a Servant*, and the person of a Sinner, and his *becoming obedient to death, even the death of the Cross*, which was the Punishment of the vilest Slaves, and the most hainous Malefactors. The Son of God came down from Heaven, from the highest pitch of Glory and Happiness, into this lower World, this *Vale of Tears*, and sink of Sin and Sorrow; and was contented himself to suffer, to save us from eternal Ruin; to be the most despicable, and the most miserable Man that ever was, that he might raise us to Glory and Honour, and advance us to

a ſtate of the greateſt Happineſs that Humane Nature is capable of.

3*dly*, If we conſider the eaſie and reaſonable Terms upon which we may be made Partakers of this unſpeakable Benefit, and that is by a conſtant and ſincere and univerſal Obedience to the Laws of God, which ſuppoſeth Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as the Root and Principle of all the Virtues of a good Life; that is, by doing that which beſt becomes us, and which is moſt agreeable to the original Frame of our Nature, and to the dictates of our Reaſon, and which, ſetting aſide the conſideration of the Reward, is really beſt for our preſent Benefit and Advantage, our Comfort and Happineſs, even in this World; for God, in giving Laws to us, hath impoſed nothing upon us, but what in all reaſon ought to have been our choice, if he had not impoſed it; nothing but what is for our good, and is in its own nature neceſſary to make us capable of that Happineſs which he hath promiſed to us. And what can be more gracious, than to make one Benefit the Condition of a greater? Than to promiſe to make us happy for ever, if we will but do that which upon all accounts is really beſt, and moſt for our Advantage in this preſent Life?

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Thirdly, Here is abundant Encouragement given to our Obedience; we have the divine Assistance promised to us, to enable us to the performance of the most difficult parts of our Duty; we have the holy Spirit of God to help our Infirmities, to excite us to that which is good, and to help and strengthen us in the doing of it.

For our further Encouragement we are assured of the divine Acceptance in case of our sincere Obedience, notwithstanding the manifold Failings and Imperfections of it, for the sake of the perfect Righteousness and Obedience, and the meritorious Sufferings of our blessed Saviour: And tho' *when we have done all that we can do, we are unprofitable Servants*, and have done nothing but what was our duty, yet God is pleased to accept what we can do, because it is sincere, and to forgive the defects and imperfections of our Obedience, for his sake, who *fulfilled all righteousness*.

And besides all this, we have the encouragement of a great and everlasting Reward, infinitely beyond all proportion of any service and Obedience that we can perform. And if God be ready to assist and strengthen us in the doing of our duty, and be willing so graciously to accept, and to reward at such a rate the sincerity of our endeavours to please him, notwith-

notwithstanding all the failings and imperfections of our best service and Obedience; what can we possibly desire more for our encouragement, to *patient continuance in well-doing*, and to be *stedfast and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the Lord.* Vol. V.

Fourthly, and *lastly*, The consideration of what hath been said upon this Argument may serve severely to rebuke the groundless Presumption of those, who rely with so much confidence upon Christ for eternal Salvation, without any conscience or care to keep his Commandments; as if Salvation lay upon his Hands, and he knew not how to dispose of it, and were glad of any one that would come and take it off upon any terms. No, *he came to save us from our Sins, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purifie to himself a peculiar people zealous of good Works.*

So that the Salvation which he hath purchased for us, doth necessarily imply our forsaking of our Sins, and returning to God and our Duty; and his Death and Sufferings are not more an argument of his great Love to Mankind, than they are a demonstration of his perfect hatred of Sin. So that if we continue in the Love and Practice of Sin, we defeat the whole design of his coming into the World, and

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of all that he hath done and suffered for us; and the Redemption which Christ hath wrought for us will not avail us in the least. *Salvation is far from the wicked*, (says *David*, Psal. 119. 155.) If we have been *workers of Iniquity*; the Saviour of the World, when he comes to judge it, will bid us *to depart from him*.

From all that hath been said, it is evident, that it is the greatest Presumption in the World, for any Man to hope to obtain eternal Salvation by any device whatsoever, or in the Communion of any Church whatsoever, without Obedience and a holy Life. For tho' our Obedience cannot merit; yet it is necessary to qualifie and dispose us for it: tho' it does not make us strictly worthy; yet it makes us *meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light*.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

The Authority of Jeſus Chriſt, with the Commiſſion and Promiſe which he gave to his Apoſtles.

MAT. XXVIII. 18, 19, 20.

And Jeſus came and ſpake unto them, ſaying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: Go ye therefore and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you: And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World.

THESE Words are the laſt that our Bleſſed Saviour ſpake to his Apoſtles, immediately before his Aſcenſion into Heaven; and there are theſe *Three* things contained in them.

I. A

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I. A Declaration of his own Authority; *All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth.*

II. A Commiſſion to his Diſciples, grounded upon that Authority; *Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghoſt: Teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you.*

III. A Promiſe to encourage them in this work; *And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

I. Here's our Saviour's Declaration of his own Authority; *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* Here's an unlimited Power and Authority given him over all Creatures in Heaven and Earth. This, the Scripture tells us, was conferred upon him, as a Reward of his Sufferings; *Phil.* 2. 8, 9, 10. *He humbled himſelf, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Croſs. Wherefore God alſo hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name, which is above every name; that at the Name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*; that is, that all Creatures, Angels, and Men, and Devils, ſhould do Homage, and acknowledge Subjection to him. II. Here

II. Here is the Commission he gave to his Apostles, by virtue of this Authority; *Go ye therefore and teach all Nations.* The Commission which he here gives, is founded in the Authority he had before received. Having all Power committed to him, he constitutes and appoints the Apostles, and their Successors, to manage the Affairs of this his spiritual Kingdom upon Earth. And this seems to be the same Commission, which St. *John* mentions in other words, *John* 20. 21. *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*; that is, as my Father commission'd me before, so now having received full Authority from him, I commission you.

Now in this Commission, which our Saviour gave to his Disciples, I shall take notice

First, Of the general Import and Design of it.

Secondly, A more particular Declaration how they were to manage this Design.

First, The general Import and Design of this Commission; *Go ye, and teach all Nations.* The word which we translate *teach*, is μαθητεύσατε, disciple all Nations, endeavour to make all the World Christians. One would think here was a Power

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er plainly enough given them, to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews. Which will more fully appear, if we compare this passage in St. *Matthew* with the other Evangelists. St. *Mark*, *ch.* 16. 15. hath it; *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* From which Text I suppose St. *Francis* thought himself bound to preach to Beasts and Birds, and accordingly did it very often, and with wonderful success, as they tell us in the Legend of his Life. But to extend our Saviour's Commission so far, is want of common sense; in which St. *Francis* (tho' they tell us he had other Gifts and Graces to an eminent degree) was plainly defective.

But to proceed, St. *Luke*, *ch.* 24. 47. tells us, our Saviour commanded, that *Repentance and remission of Sins should be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* So that their Commission did plainly extend to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews; only they were to begin with the Jews, and to preach the Gospel first to them, and when they had gone over *Judea* and *Samaria*, then to pass to other Nations, as St. *Luke* doth most expressly declare, *Acts* 1. 8. *Ye shall receive power; after that the holy Ghost*

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is come upon you, and ye ſhall be witneſſes unto me, both in Jeruſalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt parts of the earth.

But ſee the ſtrange power of Prejudice, to blind the Eyes even of good Men, in the plaineſt matters. The Diſciples of our Saviour, for all they had entertained a new Religion, yet they retained the old Pride and Prejudice of their Nation, againſt the reſt of the World; as if none but themſelves had any ſhare in the favour of God, or were to have any part in the Salvation of the Meſſias.

Our Saviour did ſo far conſider this Prejudice of theirs, that he never in his life time acquainted them with this matter, ſo as to make them fully to underſtand it, becauſe they were not able to bear it. And it is very probable, that this is one of thoſe things which our Saviour meant, *John* 16. 12, 13. *I have yet many things to ſay unto you; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.* That is, he ſhould lead them into the knowledge of thoſe Truths, of which they were not then capable. And tho' our Saviour, after his Reſurrection, ſeems to have declared this ſufficiently to them;

yet

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yet by their practice after his Ascension, it appears that they understood all this only of the *Jews*, namely that they were to preach the Gospel first to the *Jews* that were at *Jerusalem*, and in *Judea*, and then to those that were dispersed in other Nations; for 'tis clear from the History of their first Preaching, recorded in the *Acts*, that they preached to none but to the *Jews*, and the Proselytes of the *Jewish* Religion. So strong was their Prejudice, that they had not the least suspicion that this Blessing of the Gospel was intended for the Heathen World; nor were they convinced to the contrary, 'till St. *Peter* had a special Vision and Revelation to this purpose, and the holy Ghost came upon the *Gentiles* in miraculous gifts, as he had done before upon the *Jews* that were converted to Christianity. And thus the Spirit of God *led them into* this *Truth*, and then they understood this Command of our Saviour's in a larger Sense. And to this St. *Peter* plainly refers, *Acts* 10. 42. where he tells us, how that Christ after his Resurrection appeared to them, and *commanded them to preach unto the People*. So likewise do *Paul* and *Barnabas*, *Acts* 13. 46. where they speak thus to the *Jews*, *It was necessary*

neceſſary that the word ſhould firſt he preached to you, but ſeeing you put it from you, lo we turn to the Gentiles, for ſo hath the Lord commanded us. Now he no where commanded this, but in this Commiſſion, which he gave them before his Aſcenſion. Vol. V.

Secondly, You have here a particular declaration how they were to manage this work of making Diſciples to the Chriſtian Religion.

1. By baptizing them into the Chriſtian Faith.

2. By inſtructing them in the Precepts and Practices of a Chriſtian Life.

1. By baptizing them into the Chriſtian Faith, which is here call'd *baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghoſt.* Baptiſm is a ſolemn Rite appointed by our Saviour for the initiating of Perſons into the Chriſtian Religion: But it was a Ceremony in uſe before, both among the *Jews* and *Gentiles.* The Heathen obſerved it at the initiating Perſons into their Religious Myſteries; and the *Jews*, when they admitted Proſelytes to their Religion; at which time the Males (as *Maimonides* tells us) were both circumciſed and baptized, the Women were only baptized. One Circumſtance of the Baptiſm

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tiſm of grown Perſons was, that ſtanding in the Water up to the Neck, they recited ſeveral Precepts of the Law. And as the *Jewiſh* Writers further tell us, this Ceremony did not only belong to them that were of grown Years, but to the Children of Proſelytes, if it were deſired, upon condition, that when they came to Years they ſhould continue in that Religion.

Now tho' this was a religious Ceremony uſed both by *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and without any Divine Inſtitution, that we know of, our bleſſed Saviour (who in none of his Inſtitutions ſeems to have favour'd unneceſſary Innovations) was ſo far from the ſuperſtition of declining it upon this account, that it had been in religious uſe both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that he ſeems the rather to have choſen it for that very reaſon. For ſeeing it was a common Rite of all Religions, and in it ſelf very ſignificant of that Purity which is the great deſign of all Religion, it was the more likely to find the eaſier Acceptance, and to be moſt ſuitable to *that*, which he intended to be *the univerſal Religion* of the World.

As for the form of Baptiſm, *into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the holy*

holy Ghoſt, it plainly refers to that ſhort Creed, or Profeſſion of Faith, which was required of thoſe that were to be baptized, anſwerable to the reciting of the Precepts of the Law, at the baptizing of Proſelytes among the *Jews*; now the Articles of this Creed were reduced to theſe three Heads, *of the Father, Son, and holy Ghoſt*, and contains what was neceſſary to be believed concerning each of theſe. And this probably is that which the Apoſtle calls the Doctrine of Baptiſm, *Heb.* 6. 2. *viz.* a ſhort Summary of the Chriſtian Faith, the Profeſſion whereof was to be made at Baptiſm; of which the moſt ancient Fathers make ſo frequent mention, calling it *the rule of Faith*. It was a great while indeed before Chriſtians tied themſelves ſtrictly to that very form of Words, which we now call the Apoſtles Creed, but the Senſe was the ſame, tho' every one expreſt it in his own Words; nay the ſame Father reciting it upon ſeveral Occaſions, does not confine himſelf to the very ſame Expreſſions: A plain indication that they were not then ſtrictly bound up to any form of Words, but retaining the ſenſe and ſubſtance of the Articles, every one expreſt them as he pleaſed. So that *to baptize in the name*

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of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghoſt, is to perform this Rite or Sacrament by the Authority of, and with ſpecial Relation to the three Perſons of the bleſſed Trinity, *Father, Son, and holy Ghoſt*, as the chief Objects of the Chriſtian Faith, whereof ſolemn Profeſſion was then made. So that upon this form in Baptiſm appointed by our Saviour, compared with what is elſewhere ſaid in Scripture, concerning the Divinity of the Son, and the holy Ghoſt, is principally founded the Doctrine of the bleſſed Trinity, I mean in that ſimplicity, in which the Scripture hath delivered it, and not as it hath been ſince confounded and entangled in the Cobwebs and Niceties of the Schools. The Scripture indeed no where calls them Perſons, but ſpeaks of them, as we do of ſeveral Perſons, and therefore that word is not unfitly uſed to expreſs the difference between them, or at leaſt we do not know a fitter word for that purpoſe.

By *baptizing* then *in the name of the Father, Son, and holy Ghoſt*, is meant, the initiating of Men by this ſolemn Rite or Ceremony into the Chriſtian Religion, upon their profeſſion of the neceſſary Doctrines of it, concerning *the Father, Son,*

Son, and holy Ghoſt, and a ſolemn Stipulation and Engagement to live according to thoſe Doctrines: Which promiſe of a ſuitable Life and Practice was likewiſe made at the ſame time, as *Juſtin Martyr* and other of the ancient Fathers do teſtifie. Vol. V.

But before I leave this Head, it is very fit to take particular notice what uſe the Anabaptiſts make of this Text, ſo as in effect to lay the whole ſtreſs of their Cauſe upon it; as if by virtue of this Command of our Saviour's, and the manner wherein it is expreſt, all Infants, even thoſe of Chriſtian Parents, who are themſelves already admitted into the new Covenant of the Goſpel, were excluded from Baptiſm; becauſe it is here ſaid by our Saviour, *Go ye, and diſciple all Nations, baptizing them*; from whence they infer, (and very clearly and ſtrongly as they think) that none are to be baptized, but ſuch as are firſt throughly inſtructed in the Chriſtian Religion, and made Diſciples, which Infants are not, but only thoſe who are grown to ſome Maturity of Years and Underſtanding: But the Opinion and Practice of the ancient Church in this matter, is a ſufficient Bar to this Inference, at leaſt to the clearneſs

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of it. And indeed it cannot reasonably be imagined, that the Apostles, who had all of them been bred up in the *Jewish* Religion, which constantly, and by virtue of a divine Precept and Institution, admitted Infants into that Church, and to the benefits of that Covenant, by the Rite of Circumcision, and likewise the Infants of Proselytes by Baptism, (as I observed before) I say no Man can reasonably imagine, that the Apostles could understand our Saviour, as intending by any consequence from this Text, to exclude the Children of Christians out of the Christian Church, and to debar them of the benefits of the New Covenant of the Gospel: The Children of Christians being every whit as capable of being taken into this new Covenant, and of partaking of the Benefits of it, as Children of the *Jews* were of being admitted into the old: Unless we will suppose (which at first sight seems very harsh and unreasonable) that by the terms of the Christian Religion, Children are in a much worse condition, than the Children of the *Jews* were under the Law. So that the parity of Reason being so plain, nothing less than an express Prohibition from our Saviour, and an exception of Children

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from Baptism, can be thought sufficient to deprive the Children of Christians of any Priviledge, of which the *Jewish* were capable. For the plain meaning of this Commission to the Apostles is, to go and *proselyte all Nations to the Christian Religion*, and to admit them solemnly into it by Baptism, as the *Jews* were wont to proselyte Men to their Religion by Circumcision and Baptism; by which Rites also they took in the Children of the Proselytes, upon promise that when they came to Years they should continue in that Religion. And if this was our Saviour's meaning, the Apostles had no reason, from the Tenour of their Commission, to understand that the Children of Christian Proselytes were any more excluded, than the Children of Proselytes to the *Jewish* Religion, unless our Saviour had expresly excepted them; for it is a favourable Case, and in a matter of Priviledge, and therefore ought not to be determined to debar Children of it, upon any obscure consequence from a Text, which it is certain was never so understood by the Christian Church, for 1500 Years together. I have done with the *first* part of their Commission, which was to disciple or proselyte

all Nations to the Chriſtian Religion, and to admit them into the Chriſtian Church, by the Rite or Sacrament of Baptiſm. I proceed to conſider the

Second part of their Commiſſion, which was to inſtruct Men in the Precepts and Duties of a Chriſtian Life, *teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you.* You ſee how their Commiſſion bounds and limits them, they were to teach others thoſe Precepts which Chriſt had taught and deliver'd to them; they had no Power by virtue of this Commiſſion to make new Laws, which ſhould be of univerſal and perpetual Obligation, and conſequently neceſſary to the Salvation of all Chriſtians; they were only to be the Publiſhers, but not the Authors of this new Religion. And therefore St. *Paul*, when the *Corinthians* conſulted him about ſeveral things relating to Marriage and Virginity, he only gives his advice, but would not take upon him to make a Law in thoſe caſes that ſhould be binding to all Chriſtians. And for the ſame Reaſon Chriſtians do generally at this day, think themſelves abſolved from the Obligation of that Canon, which was made even in a Council of the Apoſtles, as to all thoſe Branches

ches of it, the reaſon whereof is now ceaſed. But notwithſtanding this, the Authority which our Saviour conferred upon his Apoſtles to teach his Doctrine, does in the nature of it neceſſarily imply a Power of governing the Societies of Chriſtians, under ſuch Officers, and by ſuch Rules, as are moſt ſuitable to the nature of ſuch a Society, and moſt fit to promote the great Ends of the Chriſtian Religion: For without this power of governing, they cannot be ſuppos'd to be endowed with ſufficient Authority to teach; and therefore in purſuance of this Commiſſion, we find that the Apoſtles did govern the Societies of Chriſtians by ſuch Rules and Conſtitutions, as were fitted to the then preſent circumſtances of Chriſtianity. And as they did appoint temporary Officers upon emergent Occaſions, ſo they conſtituted others that were of perpetual uſe in the Church, for the inſtructing and governing of Chriſtians, and that in ſuch a ſubordination to one another, as would be moſt effectual to the attaining of the end of Government; which ſubordination of Governours, hath not only been uſed in all Religions, but in all the well regulated Civil Societies that ever were in the

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World. And this may suffice to have spoken of the second part of their Commission.

The *Third* and *last* thing in the Text, is the Promise which our Saviour here makes for the encouragement of the Apostles in this Work; *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the World*; that is, tho' I be going from you in person, yet I will still be present with you by my Power and Spirit. And surely this must needs be a great Encouragement to have him engaged for their Assistance, *who had all Power in Heaven and Earth committed to him*, as he tells them at the 18*th. verse.*

I shall endeavour therefore, as far as the time will permit, to explain to you the true meaning and extent of this Promise. That it is primarily made to the Apostles no Man can doubt, that considers that it was spoken to them immediately by our Saviour; and in regard to them, the meaning of it is plainly this, that our Saviour would send down the holy Ghost upon them, in miraculous Gifts, to qualifie and enable them for the more speedy planting and propagating of the Gospel in the World, and that he would be with them, and assist them extraordinarily in this Work.

And

And that this is the primary meaning of it, in regard to the Apoſtles, will be very plain, by conſidering how this Promiſe is expreſt by the other Evangeliſts; *Mark* 16.17. inſtead of this Promiſe, you have theſe words, immediately after our Saviour had given them Commiſſion to go and preach the Goſpel, *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Goſpel to every Creature: He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned.* And then it follows, *Theſe ſigns ſhall follow them that believe; in my Name they ſhall caſt out Devils, and ſhall ſpeak with new Tongues.* And *Luke* 24.39. inſtead of *lo, I am with you*, it is ſaid, *Behold, I ſend the promiſe of my Father upon you*, that is, the miraculous gifts of the holy Ghoſt; for it follows in the next Words, *but tarry ye in the City of Jeruſalem, untill ye be endowed with power from on high.* This St. *Luke* himſelf interprets of the Promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, *Acts* 1. 4, 5. *He commanded them that they ſhould not depart from Jeruſalem, but wait for the promiſe of the Father, which, ſaith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with Water, but ye ſhall be baptized with the holy Ghoſt, not many days hence.* And, v. 8. *Ye ſhall receive power*

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power after that the holy Ghoſt is come upon you, and ye ſhall be witneſſes unto me, both in Jeruſalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermoſt part of the Earth. So that no Man that compares theſe Texts together, can doubt, but that this was the primary meaning of this Promiſe, as it was made to the Apoſtles.

But then it is as plain likewiſe, that this Promiſe is to be extended farther than to the Perſons of the Apoſtles, even to all thoſe that ſhould afterwards ſucceed them in this Work of Preaching the Goſpel, and baptizing, becauſe our Saviour adds, that *he would be with them to the end of the World*; which Words becauſe they reach far beyond the Apoſtles Times, (as I ſhall ſhew by and by) muſt neceſſarily be extended to ſuch Perſons in after Ages, as ſhould carry on the ſame Work.

There are two famous Controverſies about the Senſe of theſe Words, in which this Promiſe is expreſt.

The *Firſt* is concerning the Circumſtance of time mentioned in this Promiſe, *alway, to the end of the World.*

The other concerning the Subſtance of the Promiſe it ſelf, what is meant by our Saviour's *being with them.* In the *firſt*

we

we have to deal with the Enthuſiaſts, in the *latter* with the Papiſts. I ſhall examine the Pretences of both theſe, as briefly and plainly as I can. Vol. V.

Firſt, Concerning the Circumſtance of time expreſt in theſe words, *alway, to the end of the world.* The Enthuſiaſts would perſwade us, that the meaning of theſe Phraſes is not to be extended beyond that Age, and that this Promiſe is to be limited to the Apoſtles Perſons, and that the Senſe of it is, that Chriſt would be with the Apoſtles πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας, all their Days, ſo long as they ſhould live, and that would be, ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, to the end of that Age; thus they tranſlate it, and with no worſe deſign than to take away the Neceſſity of a Goſpel Miniſtry.

But this Pretence will vaniſh, if we can make good theſe *two* things.

1. That the Letter of this Promiſe extends farther than the Perſons of the Apoſtles, and the continuance of that Age.

2. However that be, it is certain that the reaſon of it extends to all that ſhould ſucceed them in their Miniſtry, to the end of the World.

1. The Letter of this Promiſe extends farther than the Perſons of the Apoſtles, and

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and the continuance of that Age. I will eaſily grant that the Phraſe πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ſignifies only *continually*, *I will be with you continually*; but then the other Phraſe ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, until the end of the World, is ſeveral times in Scripture undeniably uſed for the End and Diſſolution of all things, and cannot with any Probability be ſhewn to be ever uſed otherwiſe. In this Senſe it is unqueſtionably uſed three times, *Matth.* 13. *The Harveſt is the end of the World*, v. 39. *So ſhall it be at the end of the world*. v. 40. and v. 49. it is ſaid, that at *the end of the World, the Angels ſhall come forth, and ſever the wicked from the juſt, and caſt them into the Furnace*; which muſt either be underſtood of the end of the World, and of the day of Judgment, or there will be no clear Text in the whole Bible to that purpoſe; and it is very probable, that this Phraſe is uſed in the ſame Senſe, *Matth.* 24. 3. where the Diſciples ask our Saviour, *What ſhall be the ſign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* as will appear to any one that conſiders our Saviour's Anſwer to this Queſtion; the latter part whereof cannot, without too much Violence, be accommodated to any thing but the final Diſſolution

Diſſolution of the World. Now if this Phraſe be every where elſe in Scripture uſed in this Senſe, there is no reaſon why it ſhould be taken otherwiſe in the Text, only to ſerve the purpoſe of an unreaſonable Opinion. Vol. V.

I know there are Phraſes very near akin to this, which are uſed in a quite different Senſe, namely, for the expiration of the *Jewiſh* State; and that we may know how to diſtinguiſh them, it is obſervable, that when the Scripture ſpeaks of the end of the World, it is call'd συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος, the end of the Age, in the ſingular Number; but when it ſpeaks of the Times before the Goſpel, it always expreſſeth them in the plural; the reaſon of which is, that famous Tradition among the Jews, of the Houſe of *Elias*, which diſtributed the whole duration of the World into three Ages; the Age before the Law, the Age under the Law, and the Age of the Meſſias; and this laſt Age they looked on with great difference from the reſt, as the famous and glorious Age, which was to be as it were the beginning of a new World: And therefore the Jews in their Writings conſtantly call it the *ſeculum futurum*, the Age, or the World to come: And there-

fore

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fore the Apostle in this Epistle to the *Hebrews*, calls the State of the Gospel by that name, as best known to them, *Heb.* 2. 5. *But unto the Angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we now speak*; that is, the Law was given by the disposition of Angels; but the dispensation of the Gospel, which is call'd the World to come, was managed and administred by the Son of God. So likewise *Heb.* 6. 5. those miraculous Powers which accompanied the first preaching of the Gospel, are call'd δυνάμεις τῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, *the Powers of the World to come*, that is, of the Gospel Age.

So that this last Age of the Gospel, is that which the Scripture by way of Eminency calls *the Age*; those that went before are constantly call'd αἰῶνες, the Ages, in the plural number. So we find, *Eph.* 3. 9. the Gospel is call'd *the dispensation of the Mystery that was hid in God*, ἀπὸ τῶν αἰωνων *from Ages*; and you have the same Phrase, *Col.* 1. 26. Upon the same account, the expiration of the Jewish State, is in Scripture called *the last times*, and *the last days*. Heb. 1. 2. *But in these last days, God hath spoken to us by his Son*: 1 Cor. 10. 11. *These things are written for our Admonition, upon whom* τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων,

αἰώνων, *the ends of the Ages are come.* In the ſame Senſe the Apoſtle, *Heb.* 9. 26. ſpeaking of Chriſt, ſays, that *he appeared,* ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, *at the end of the Ages,* to take away Sin; that is, at the Concluſion of the Ages which had gone before, in the laſt Age. So that if we will be governed in the Interpretation of this Text, by the conſtant uſe of this Phraſe in Scripture, the Letter of this Promiſe will extend to the end of the World. Vol. V.

2. But however this be, it is certain that the Reaſon of this Promiſe does extend to all thoſe that ſhould ſucceed the Apoſtles in their Miniſtry, to the end of the World: I will ſuppoſe now (to give our Adverſaries their utmoſt ſcope) that which we have no reaſon to grant, that the Letter of this Promiſe reacheth only to the Apoſtles and their Age, and that our Saviour's meaning was no more but this, that he would ſend down the holy Ghoſt upon them in miraculous Gifts, to qualifie and inable them for the ſpeedy planting and propagating of the Goſpel in the World, and that he would be with them, 'till this Work was done. Now ſuppoſing there were nothing more than this intended in the letter of it, this ought not much to trouble

trouble us, so long as it is certain, that the Reason of it does extend to the Successors of the Apostles in all Ages of the World. I do not mean, that the Reason of this Promise does give us sufficient Assurance, that God will assist the Teachers and Governours of his Church in all Ages, in the same extraordinary manner, as he did the Apostles, because there is not the like reason and necessity for it; but that we have sufficient Assurance from the Reason of this Promise, that God will not be wanting to us, in such fitting and necessary Assistance, as the state of Religion, and the welfare of it in every Age shall require: For can we imagine that God would use such extraordinary means to plant a Religion in the World, and take no care of it afterwards? That he who had begun so good a Work, so great and glorious a Design, would let it fall to the ground for want of any thing that was necessary to the Support of it?

This is reasonable in it self; but we are not also without good ground for thus extending the general reason of particular Promises beyond the Letter of them. The Apostle hath gone before us in this, for *Heb.* 13. 5, 6. he there extends

tends two particular Promiſes of the Old Teſtament to all Chriſtians; *Let your Converſation* (ſays he) *be without Covetouſneſs, and be content with ſuch things as ye have: For he hath ſaid, I will never leave thee nor forſake thee.* And again, *The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what Man can do unto me.* Theſe Promiſes were made to particulur Perſons; the firſt of them to *Joſhua*, and the other to *David*; but yet the Apoſtle applies them to all Chriſtians, and to good Men in all Ages, becauſe the general Ground and Reaſon of them extended ſo far. He who gave *Joſhua* and *David* this encouragement to their Duty, will certainly be as good to us, if we do ours.

And thus I have done with the firſt Controverſie about the Senſe of theſe Words, which concerns the Circumſtance of time mentioned in this Promiſe, *always, to the end of the World*, and have plainly ſhewn, that both the Letter and the Reaſon of this Promiſe does extend further than the Perſons of the Apoſtles, and the continuance of that Age, even to all that ſhould ſucceed them in their Miniſtry to the end of the World. I come now to conſider,

Secondly, The Subſtance of the Promiſe

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miſe it ſelf, namely, what is meant by our Saviour's *being with them.* And here our Adverſaries of the Church of *Rome* would fain perſwade us, that this Promiſe is made to the Church of *Rome*, and that the meaning of it is, that *that* Church ſhould always be infallible, and never err in the Faith. But as there is no mention of the Church of *Rome* in this Promiſe, nor any where elſe in Scripture upon the like Occaſion, whereby we might be directed to underſtand this Promiſe to be made to that Church; ſo to any unprejudiced Perſon, the plain and obvious Senſe of this Promiſe can be no other than this, that our Saviour having commiſſionated the Apoſtles to go and preach the Chriſtian Religion in the World, he promiſes to aſſiſt them in this work, and thoſe that ſhould ſucceed them in it, *to the end of the World.* But how any Man can conſtrue this Promiſe, ſo as to make it ſignifie the perpetual Infallibility of the *Roman* Church, I cannot for my life deviſe; and yet this is one of the main Texts upon which they build that old and tottering Fabrick of their Infallibility.

Here is a general Promiſe of Aſſiſtance to the Paſtors and Governours of the Church

Church, in all Ages to the end of the World; but that this Aſſiſtance ſhall always be to the degree of Infallibility, (as it was to the Apoſtles) can neither be concluded from the letter of this Promiſe, nor from the Reaſon of it; much leſs can it be from hence concluded, that the Aſſiſtance here promiſed, if it were to the degree of Infallibility, is to be limited and confined to the ſupream Paſtor and Governor of the *Roman* Church.

That the Aſſiſtance here promiſed ſhall always be to the degree of Infallibility, can by no means be concluded from the Letter of this Promiſe. Indeed there is no Pretence or Colour for it; he muſt have a very peculiar Sagacity, that can find out in theſe words, *I am with you always*, a promiſe of infallible Aſſiſtance. Is not the Promiſe which God made to *Joſhua*, and which the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* applies to all Chriſtians, and to all Good Men in all Ages, *I will never leave thee nor forſake thee*, the very ſame in ſenſe with this, *I will be with you always*? and yet ſurely, no Man did ever imagine, that by virtue of this Promiſe, every Chriſtian, and every good Man is infallible.

But neither can it be inferr'd from the Reaſon of this Promiſe, that this Aſſiſtance ſhall always be to the degree of Infallibility. It was ſo indeed to the Apoſtles; the miraculous Gifts of the holy Ghoſt, which were beſtowed upon them for the more ſpeedy and effectual planting and propagating of the Goſpel in the World, were a divine Teſtimony and Confirmation to the Doctrine which they delivered; and having this divine Teſtimony given to them, we are certain that they were ſecured from Error in the delivery of that Doctrine. So that the Apoſtles had no other Infallibility, but what depended upon, and was evidenced by the miraculous Gifts wherewith they were endowed; and therefore without the like Gifts, none can with Reaſon pretend to the like Infallibity. For Infallibility ſignifies an extraordinary Aſſiſtance of God's Spirit, whereby thoſe who are thus aſſiſted are ſecured from Error. This every confident Man may, if he pleaſeth, pretend to; but no Man is to be believed to have it, but he who can give ſuch Evidence of it, as is fit to ſatisfie reaſonable Men, that he hath it. Now the only ſufficient Evidence of ſuch an extraordinary

Divine Assistance is the Power of Miracles. This indeed is the great external Testimony of a Teacher come from God, *if he do such Works as none can do, except God be with him*; and this Evidence the Prophets of old, and our Saviour, and his Apostles, always gave of their Infallibility. And if the Pope and general Councils, can give the Testimony of such Miracles for their Infallibility, as *Moses*, and our Saviour, and his Apostles did work, we are ready to acknowledge it. Such a Testimony as this would give the World a thousand times more Satisfaction concerning their Infallibility, than all the subtil Arguments of *Bellarmine*, and all their Writers. But if they cannot, they may dispute about it to the end of the World; and every Man that hath but the same confidence may pretend to it, with as much reason as they do. Vol. V.

But to proceed in my Argument, here is a plain Reason why this extraordinary Assistance should be granted to the Apostles at first; and another Reason as plain, why it should not be continued afterwards. It was reasonable, and in some degree necessary, that the Apostles should be thus assisted at the first publi-

cation of the Gospel, namely to give satisfaction to the World, that they were faithful and true Witnesses of the Doctrine and Miracles of Christ. But since this Doctrine and these Miracles are recorded to Posterity, by those very Persons that were thus assisted, here is as plain a Reason, why after the Gospel was planted and establisht in the World, this Infallibility should cease. So long as we have an infallible Foundation of Faith, namely, the Divine Revelation consigned in Writing, and transmitted down to us by Testimony of undoubted Credit, what need is there now of a fixt and standing Infallibility in the Church? But having handled this Argument more at large else-where, I shall insist no further upon it here.

I have now done with the *three* things I propounded to discourse upon, from this Text. You have heard what Authority our Saviour had given him; what Commission he gave to his Disciples; and what Assistance he hath promised to the Pastors and Governors of his Church to the end of the World; namely such an Assistance, as is suitable to the exigencies of the Church, in the several Ages and States of Christianity; which Assistance

ſiſtance was at firſt very extraordinary and miraculous. God was pleaſed to *give witneſs* to the firſt Teachers and Publiſhers of the Goſpel, *with ſigns and wonders, and divers Miracles, and Gifts of the holy Ghoſt*; and this at firſt was in a very great degree neceſſary, it not being otherwiſe imaginable, how Chriſtianity could have born up againſt all that Force and violent Oppoſition which was raiſed againſt it: But this extraordinary aſſiſtance was but a temporary and tranſient Diſpenſation. God did, as it were, paſs by, *in the ſtrong and mighty Wind, in the Earthquake, and in the Fire: but he* was *in the ſtill Voice*, that is, he deſigned to ſettle and continue in that Diſpenſation, in that more calm and ſecret way of Aſſiſtance, which offers leſs Violence to the Nature of Man, but which was intended for the conſtant and permanent Diſpenſation. So that we have no reaſon to think, that God hath now forſaken his Church, though he be not with it in ſo ſenſible and extraordinary a manner.

But then if any particular Church deſire and expect this bleſſed Preſence and Aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit, we muſt remember, that there is a Condition to be performed on our

parts. For how absolute soever this Promise may be, in respect of the Church universal; it is certainly conditional, to any particular Church, as sad experience in many Instances hath shewn. God hath long since left the Church of *Jerusalem*, where the Gospel was first publisht; he hath left the Church of *Antioch*, where the Believers of the Gospel were first call'd *Christians*; he hath left the famous Churches of *Asia*, to that degree of Desolation, that the Ruins and Places of some of them, are hardly at this Day certainly known. And this may also be the fate of any particular Church, not excepting *Rome* her self, for all her Pride and Confidence to the contrary. *Behold therefore the Goodness and Severity of God: towards them that fell Severity; but towards us Goodness, if we continue in his Goodness: otherwise we also shall be cut off.*

This, as I observed before, is spoken particularly to the *Roman* Church; the Apostle supposeth that the Church of *Rome* her self may be guilty of Apostacy from the Faith, and cut off by Unbelief, and indeed seems to foretel it; which how it consists with their confident Pretence to Infallibility, let them look to it.

And

And let all particular Churches look to themſelves, that they do not forfeit this Promiſe of Divine Aſſiſtance. For Chriſt hath not ſo tyed himſelf to any particular Church, but that if they forſake him, he may leave them, and *remove his Candleſtick from them.* There have been many ſad Inſtances of this, ſince the firſt planting of Chriſtianity; and we have no ſmall Reaſon to apprehend that it may come to be our own caſe; for certainly we have many of thoſe marks of Ruin among us, which did foretel the Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* Church and Nation; horrible Prophaneſs and Contempt of Religion, Diviſion and Animoſities to the higheſt degree, and an univerſal Diſſoluteneſs and Corruption of Manners. And why ſhould we, who do the ſame things, think our ſelves exempted from the ſame Fate? What can we expect, but that God ſhould deal with us, as he did with them, *Take away the Kingdom of God from us, and give it to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?*

The Condition of this great Promiſe here in the Text, to the Paſtors and Governors of the Chriſtian Church, is the faithful Execution of their Commiſſion; if

Vol. V. if they do sincerely endeavour to gain Men to the Belief and Practice of Christianity, Christ hath promised to be with them. The performance of this Condition doth primarily concern the chief Governours of the Church, and next to them, the Ministers of the Gospel in general, that they would be diligent and faithful in their respective Stations, *teaching Men to observe all things, whatsoever Christ hath commanded.* And if we would make this our great Work, to instruct our respective Charges, in the necessary Doctrines of Faith, and the indispensable Duties of a good Life, we should have far less trouble with them about other matters. And that we may do this Work effectually, we must be serious in our Instructions, and exemplary in our Lives. *Serious in our Instructions*; this certainly the Apostle requires in the highest degree, when he chargeth Ministers, *so to speak, as the Oracles of God,* to which nothing can be more contrary, than to trifle with the Word of God, and to speak of the weightiest matters in the World, the great and everlasting Concernments of the Souls of Men, in so slight and indecent a manner, as is not only beneath the Gravity of

of the Pulpit, but even of a well regulated Stage. Can any thing be more unſuitable, than to hear a Miniſter of God from this ſolemn place to break Jeſts upon Sin, and to quibble upon the Vices of the Age? This is to ſhoot without a Bullet, and as if we had no mind to do Execution, but only to make Men ſmile at the mention of their Faults; this is ſo nauſeous a Folly, and of ſo pernicious conſequence to Religion, that hardly any thing too ſevere can be ſaid of it.

And then if we would have our Inſtructions effectual, we muſt be *exemplary in our Lives*. *Ariſtotle* tells us, that the manners of the Speaker have κυριωτάτην πίστιν, the moſt ſoveraign power of Perſwaſion. And therefore *Cato* puts it into the definition of an Orator, that he is, *vir bonus, dicendi peritus, a good Man, and an eloquent Speaker*. This is true as to all kinds of Perſwaſion; the good Opinion which Men have of the Speaker, gives great weight to his Words, and does ſtrangely diſpoſe the Minds of Men to entertain his Counſels. But the Reputation of Goodneſs is more eſpecially neceſſary and uſeful to thoſe whoſe proper Work it is to perſwade Men to be

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be good; and therefore the Apostle, when he had charged *Titus* to put Men in mind of their Duty, he immediately adds, *in all things shewing thy self a Patern of good Works.* None so fit to teach others their Duty, and none so likely to gain Men to it, as those who practise it themselves; because hereby we convince Men that we are in earnest, when they see that we perswade them to nothing, but what we chuse to do our selves. This is the way to *stop the Mouths of Men*, and to confute their Malice, by an exemplary piety and Virtue. So St. *Peter* tells us, 1 *Pet.* 2. 15. *For so is the will of God, that by well doing ye put to silence the Ignorance of foolish Men.*

SERMON

SERMON IX.

The Difficulties of a Chriſtian Life conſider'd.

LUKE XIII. 24.

Strive to enter in at the ſtrait Gate; for many, I ſay unto you, will ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.

THERE are two great Miſtakes about the Nature of Religion, equally falſe, and equally pernicious to the Souls of Men; and the Devil, whoſe great deſign it is, to keep Men off from Religion by any Means, makes uſe of both theſe Miſtakes, to ſerve his own Purpoſe and Deſign upon the ſeveral Tempers of Men. Thoſe who are melancholy and ſerious, he diſheartens and diſcourageth from attempting it, by the extream trouble and difficulty

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ficulty of it, repreſenting it in ſo horrid and frightful a Shape, encumber'd with ſuch Difficulties, and attended with ſuch Troubles and Sufferings, as are inſuperable, and intolerable to Human Nature; whereby he perſwades Men, that they had better never attempt it, ſince they may deſpair to go through with it.

On the other hand, thoſe who are ſanguine and full of hopes, he poſſeſſes with a quite contrary Apprehenſion; that the buſineſs of Religion is ſo ſhort and eaſie a Work, that it may be done at any time, and if need be, at the laſt Moment of our Lives, tho' it is not ſo well to put it upon the laſt hazard; and by this means, a great part of Mankind are lull'd in ſecurity, and adjourn the buſineſs of Religion from time to time; and becauſe it is ſo eaſie, and ſo much in their Power, they ſatisfie themſelves with an indeterminate Reſolution to ſet about that buſineſs ſome time or other before they die, and ſo to repent, and make their Peace with God once for all.

Theſe Pretences contradict one another, and therefore cannot be both true, but they may both be falſe, as indeed they are, and Truth lies between them; Religion beingneither ſo ſlight and eaſie

a Work as some would have it, nor so extreamly difficult and intolerable, as others would represent it. To confute the false apprehensions which some have of the easiness of it, our Saviour tells us, there must be some *striving*; and to satisfie us, that the difficulties of Religion are not so great and insuperable, as some would make them, our Saviour tells us, that those who *strive* shall succeed and *enter in*; but those who only *seek*, that is, do not vigorously set about the business of Religion, but only make some faint Attempts to get to Heaven, *shall not be able to enter in. Strive to enter in at the strait Gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, but shall not be able.*

The occasion of which words of our Blessed Saviour, was a Question, that was put to him, by one of his Disciples, concerning the number of those, that should be Saved, *v.* 23. One said unto him, *Lord, are there few, that be Saved?* To which curious Question, our Saviour (according to his manner, when such kind of Questions were put to him) does not give a direct Answer, because it was neither Necessary, nor Useful for his Hearers to be Resolved in it, it did not concern them, to know what Number

Vol. V. ber of Perſons ſhould be Saved, but what courſe they ſhould take that they might be of that Number; and therefore, inſtead of ſatisfying their Curioſities, he puts them upon their Duty; admoniſhing them, inſtead of concerning themſelves what ſhould become of others, to take care of themſelves. *And he ſaid unto them, Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; for many, I ſay unto you, ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* He does not ſay, that *but few ſhall be ſaved*; (as ſome have preſumptuouſly ventur'd to determine) but only *few* in compariſon of thoſe *many, that ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.*

In theſe Words we may conſider theſe *Two* Things.

Firſt, The Duty enjoined, *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate.*

Secondly, The Reaſon or Argument to enforce it, *for many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.*

Firſt, The Duty enjoined; *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate.* Which words being Metaphorical, I ſhall ſtrip them of the Metaphor, that ſo we may ſee the plain meaning of them. Now by this Metaphor, or rather Allegory, theſe *Three* Things are plainly intended. 1*ſt*. The

1*st*. The Course of a Holy and Christian Life, in order to the obtaining of Eternal Happiness, is here represented to us by *a way*, which every Man, that would come to Heaven, must walk in. For so St. *Matth.* (who expresseth this more fully) makes mention of a *way*; as well as a *gate*, by which we must enter into it; *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth to Life.* And this, tho' it be not express'd by St. *Luke*, is necessarily understood, *Strive to enter in* by *the strait gate*, that is, into the *way* that leads *to life.*

2*dly*. The first Difficulties of a Holy and Religious Course of Life, are here represented to us by a *strait Gate.* For the *Gate* at which we enter, and the *way* in which we walk, can signifie nothing else, but the beginning and progress of a Holy and Religious Course.

3*dly*. Our Diligence and Constancy in this Course, are represented by *striving*, a word which hath a great Force and Emphasis in it, ἀγωνίζεσθε, a Metaphor taken from the earnest Contention which was used in the *Olympick* Games, by those who strove for Mastery in running or wrestling, or any of the other Exercises which were there used.

Secondly, Here is a Reaſon added to enforce the Exhortation or Duty; *for many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able*; that is, there are a great many that will do ſomething in Chriſtianity, and make ſome faint attempts to get to Heaven, who yet ſhall fall ſhort of it, for want of ſuch a firm Reſolution and Earneſtneſs of Endeavour, as is neceſſary to the attaining of it.

Having thus explained the Words, I ſhall take occaſion from the firſt part of them, namely, the Duty or Exhortation, to handle theſe *three* Points, very uſeful for us to conſider, and to be well inſtructed in.

1*ſt*. The Difficulties of a Holy and Chriſtian Courſe.

2*dly*, The firm Reſolution, and earneſt Endeavour that is required on our part, for the conquering of theſe Difficulties.

3*dly*, That theſe Difficulties are not ſo great and inſuperable, as to be a juſt Diſcouragement to our Endeavours; if we will *ſtrive*, we may maſter them.

Firſt, The Difficulties of a Holy and Chriſtian Courſe. And theſe are either from our ſelves, or from ſomething without us.

1. From

1. From our selves, from the Original Corruption and Depravation of our Nature, and the power of evil Habits and Customs, contracted by vicious Practices. Our Natures are vitiated and depraved, inclined to evil, and impotent to good; besides that being habituated to Sin and Vice, it is a matter of infinite Difficulty to break off a Custom, and to turn the course of our Life another way. Now because this is the difficulty of our first Entrance into Religion, it is represented by a *strait Gate* which is hard to get through.

2. There are likewise other difficulties from without; as namely, the Opposition and Persecution of the World, which was very raging and violent in the first beginnings of Christianity. And this our Saviour represents by the ruggedness and roughness of the Way, as St. *Matth.* expresseth it, *Chap.* 7. 14. *Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to Life,* Καὶ τεθλιμμένη ἡ ὁδὸς, *confragosa est via,* (so *Grotius* renders it) the Way is craggy, full of Afflictions and Troubles.

So that these are the two great Difficulties in a Christian Course, Indisposition from within, and Opposition from without.

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1. Indiſpoſition from within. And this makes Religion ſo much the more difficult, becauſe it checks us at our very firſt Entrance upon our Chriſtian Courſe, and makes us unwilling to ſet out. The Corruption of our Nature, and thoſe vicious Habits which by a long cuſtom of Sin we have contracted, do ſtrongly encline us the contrary way, ſo that a Man muſt offer great Force and Violence to himſelf, that will conquer this Difficulty. It is one of the hardeſt things in the World to break off a vicious Habit, and to get looſe from the Tyranny of Cuſtom. The Prophet *Jeremiah* ſpeaks of it, as next to a natural Impoſſibility, *chap.* 13. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin? or the Leopard his ſpots? Then may ye alſo do good, that are accuſtomed to do evil.* This requires great Striving indeed. Nothing ſhows the Spirit, and Reſolution of a Man more, than to contend with an inveterate Habit; for in this caſe a Man ſtrives againſt the very bent and inclination of his Soul; and 'tis eaſier to ſet a Man againſt all the World, than to make him fight with himſelf: and yet this every Man muſt do, who from any wicked courſe of Life, betakes himſelf ſeriouſly to Religion; he muſt as it were

were lay violent Hands upon himſelf, and fight with the Man he was before; and this in Scripture is emphatically expreſt to us, by *crucifying the old Man, with the Affections and Luſts thereof.* A Chriſtian when he firſt enters upon a Holy and good Courſe of life, is repreſented as two Perſons or Parties at civil Wars one with another; *the Old*, and *the New Man*: So that whoever will be a Chriſtian muſt put off himſelf, and become another Man; and 'tis no eaſie matter for a Man to quit himſelf.

2. In our Chriſtian Courſe, we muſt likewiſe expect to meet with great Oppoſition from without. Bleſſed be God, Chriſtianity hath generally been for many Ages free from this Difficulty, which attended the firſt Profeſſion of it; it was then indeed a very ſteep and craggy way, very rough and thorny, not to be travelled in without Sweat and Blood; then the Dangers and Hazards of that Profeſſion were ſuch, as were not to be encountred by a mere moral Reſolution, and the natural Strength of Fleſh and Blood; the Perſecution that attended it was ſo hot, and the Torments which threatned it ſo terrible, that the ſenſual and inconſiderate part of Mankind

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would rather venture Hell at a diſtance, than run themſelves upon ſo preſent and evident a Danger.

But ſince theſe Ages of Perſecution, this Difficulty hath been in a great meaſure removed. Not but that the true Religion hath ſtill its Enemies in the world; but they are not let looſe, as they were in thoſe times: It is ſtill perſecuted and expoſed to the Malice and Reproach, but not to the Rage and Fury of unreaſonable Men. In the calmeſt times there is hardly any Man can be a ſtrict and ſincere Chriſtian, without being liable to Hatred and Contempt, without denying himſelf many of thoſe worldly Advantages, which thoſe who make no Conſcience of the ſtrict Laws of Chriſtianity may make to themſelves; ſo that at all times it requires a good degree of Conſtancy and Reſolution to perſevere in a Holy Courſe, and to bear up againſt the Oppoſition of the World, and to withſtand its Temptations, to be *harmleſs and blameleſs in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Nation*; not to be infected with the eminent and frequent Examples of Vice, and carryed down with the ſtream of a corrupt and degenerate Age. So that tho' our Difficulties be not always the ſame,

ſame, and equal to thoſe which the Primitive Chriſtians encountred, yet there is enough to exerciſe our beſt Reſolution and Care; tho' the main Body of the Enemies of Chriſtianity be broken, and *the Sons of Anak be deſtroyed out of the Land*; yet *ſome of the old Inhabitants are ſtill left, to be Thorns in our Sides, and Pricks in our Eyes*, that true Religion may always have ſomething to exerciſe its Force and Vigour upon. I have done with the *firſt* Point, the Difficulties of a Chriſtian Courſe. I proceed to the

Second, The earneſt Endeavour that is to be uſed on our Part, for the conquering of theſe Difficulties. And to the buſineſs of Religion, if we will ſet upon it in good earneſt, theſe *three* things are required.

1*ſt*, A mighty Reſolution to engage us in a Holy and Chriſtian Courſe.

2*dly*, Great Diligence and Induſtry to carry us on in it.

3*dly*, An invincible Conſtancy to carry us through it, and make us perſevere in it to the end.

1*ſt*, A mighty Reſolution to engage us in a Holy and Good Courſe. For want of this, moſt Men miſcarry and ſtumble at the very Threſhold, and ne-

ver get through the *ſtrait Gate*, never maſter the Difficulties of the firſt Entrance. Many are well diſpoſed toward Religion, and have fits of good Inclination that way, (eſpecially in their young and tender Years) but they want firmneſs of Reſolution to conquer the Difficulties of the firſt entrance upon a religious and virtuous Life; like the young Man that came to our Saviour, well inclined to do ſome *good thing*, that *he might inherit eternal Life*; but when it came to the point, he gave back, he was divided betwixt Chriſt and the World, and had not Reſolution enough *to part with all for him.*

Many Men (I doubt not) have frequent Thoughts and Deliberations about a better Courſe of Life, and are in a good Mind to take up, and break off that lewd and riotous Courſe they are in; but they cannot bring themſelves to a fixt Purpoſe and Reſolution: and yet without this nothing is to be done, *the double minded Man is unſtable in all his ways.* There muſt be no Indifferency and Irreſoluteneſs in our Minds, if we will be Chriſtians; we muſt not ſtop at the *Gate*, but reſolve to preſs in. We ſee that Men can take up peremptory Reſolutions

lutions in other matters, to be rich and great in the World, and they can be true and stedfast to these Resolutions; and why should not Men resolve to be Wise and Happy, and stand to these Resolutions, and make them good? God is more ready to assist and strengthen these kind of resolutions than any other; and I am sure no man hath so much reason to resolve upon anything, as to live a Holy and Virtuous Life; no other resolution can do a man that good, and bring him that comfort and happiness, that this will.

2dly, The business of Religion, as it requires a mighty Resolution to engage us in a holy and good course, so likewise a great Diligence to carry us on in it. When we are got through the *strait gate*, we must account to meet with many difficulties in our way; there are in the course of a Christian's Life many Duties to be performed, which require great pains and care; many Temptations to be resisted, which will keep us continually upon our guard; a great part of the Way is up Hill, and not to be climb'd without Labour; and the Scripture frequently calls upon us, *to work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*;

trembling, that is, with great Care and Induſtry; *to give all diligence to make our calling and election ſure*; to follow Holineſs, διώκειν, to purſue it with great earneſtneſs. Nothing of this World that is of value, is to be had upon other terms; and we have low thoughts of Heaven, if we think any pains too much to get thither.

3*dly*, The buſineſs of Religon requires an invincible Conſtancy to carry us through it, and to make us perſevere in it to the End. Reſolution may make a good entrance; but it requires great Conſtancy and Firmneſs of Mind, to hold out in a good Courſe. A good Reſolution may be taken up, upon a preſent heat, and may cool again; but nothing but a conſtant and ſteady temper of Mind will make a man perſevere; and yet without this, no Man ſhall ever reach Heaven. *He that continueth to the end ſhall be ſaved; but if any Man draw back, God's Soul will have no pleaſure in him.* God puts this Caſe by the Prophet, and determines it, *Ezekiel* 18. 24. *When the righteous Man turneth away from his Righteouſneſs, ſhall he live? all his Righteouſneſs that he hath done, ſhall not be mentioned; in his Treſpaſs that he hath treſpaſſed,*

treſpaſſed, and in his Sin that he hath ſinned, in them he ſhall die; nay, ſo far will his Righteouſneſs be from availing him, if he do not perſevere in it, that it will render his Condition much worſe, to have gone ſo far towards Heaven, and at laſt to turn his Back upon it. So St. *Peter* tells us, 2 *Pet.* 2. 20, 21. *For if after they have eſcaped the Pollutions of the World, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they are again entangled therein and overcome; the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of Righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered unto them.* I proceed to the

Third Point, namely, That the Difficulties of a Holy and a Chriſtian Life are not ſo great and inſuperable, as to be a juſt ground of diſcouragement to our Endeavours. All that I have ſaid concerning the Difficulties of Religion, was with no deſign to damp, but rather to quicken our Induſtry; for, upon the whole matter, when all things are duly conſidered, it will appear, that *Chriſt's yoke is eaſie, and his burthen light*; that *the Commandments of God are not grievous*;

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grievous; no, not this Commandment of *ſtriving to enter in at the ſtrait gate*; which I ſhall endeavour to make manifeſt, by taking theſe *Four* things into conſideration.

1. The Aſſiſtance which the Goſpel offers to us. God hath there promiſed *to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him*; and by the aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit, we may be able to conquer all thoſe difficulties. Indeed if we were left to our ſelves, to the impotency and weakneſs of our own Nature, we ſhould never be able to cope with theſe Difficulties; every Temptation would be too hard for us; every little Oppoſition would diſcourage us: but *God is with us*, and *there is nothing too hard for him.* If the Principles of a Holy Life, were only the Birth of our own Reſolution, they would eaſily be born down; but they are from God, of a Heavenly Birth and Original; and whatſoever is *born of God, overcometh the World.* John 1.12, 13. *As many as received him, to them gave he power* (ἐξουσίαν, the priviledge) *to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

God

God conſiders the Impotency of Humane Nature, in this deprav'd and degenerate ſtate into which we are ſunk, and therefore he hath not left us to our ſelves; but when he commands us to *work out our own Salvation*, he tells us for our Encouragement, that *he himſelf works in us both to will and to do*; he does not bid us to be ſtrong in our own ſtrength, for he knows we have no ſtrength of our own, but to be *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*; and what may not even a weak Creature do, that is ſo powerfully aſſiſted? If we will but make uſe of this ſtrength, nothing can be too hard for us. All that God expects from us is, That we ſhould comply with the motions of his Spirit, and be as ſincere in the Uſe of our own endeavours, as he is in the offers of his Grace and aſſiſtance.

2. Let us conſider, That the greateſt Difficulties are at firſt; 'tis but making one manful Onſet, and ſuſtaining the firſt Brunt, and the Difficulties will abate and grow leſs, and our ſtrength will every day increaſe and grow more. *The Gate is ſtrait*: but when we have once got through it, *our feet will be ſet in an open place.* After ſome ſtrugling

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to get through, we shall every day find our selves at more Ease and Liberty. It will be very hard at first, to master our vicious Inclinations, to change the habit of our Minds, and the course of our Lives, and to act contrary to what we have been long accustomed: but this Trouble lasts but for a little while; these Pangs of the New-Birth, tho' they be sharp, yet they are not usually of long continuance.

It does indeed require great Resolution and firmness of Mind, to Encounter the first Difficulties of Religion: but if we can but stand it out for one brunt, our Enemy will give way, and the pleasure of Victory will tempt us on. It is troublesome to conflict with great Difficulties, and Men are loth to be brought to it: but when we are engaged, it is one of the greatest pleasures in the World to prevail and Conquer. Many Men are loth to go to War; but after a little Success, they are as loth to give over; that which was a terrour to them at first, turns into a pleasure.

3. Consider that Custom will make any course of life tolerable, and most things easie. Religion, and the practice

ctice of a Holy Life is difficult at firſt: but after we are once habituated to it, the trouble will wear off by degrees, and that which was grievous will become eaſie; nay, by degrees, much more pleaſant than ever the contrary practice was. We ſee the daily experience of this, in the moſt difficult and laborious Employments of this World; a little pains tires a Man at firſt, but when he is once ſeaſoned and enured to Labour, Idleneſs becomes more tedious and troubleſome to him than the hardeſt work. Cuſtom will make any thing eaſie, tho' it be a little unnatural. Nothing is more unnatural than Sin; 'tis not according to our Original Nature and Frame, but it is the Corruption and Depravation of it, a ſecond Nature ſuperinduced upon us by Cuſtom: whereas the practice of Holineſs and Virtue is agreeable to our Original and Primitive State, and Sin and Vice are the perverting of Nature, contrary to our Reaſon, and the deſign of our Beings, and to all Obligations of Duty and Intereſt: But by returning to God and our Duty, we return to our Primitive State, we act naturally, and according to the intention of our Beings;

and

Vol. V. and when the force of a contrary Custom is taken off, and the Byas clapt on the other side, *we shall run the ways of God's Commandments with more delight* and satisfaction, than ever we found in the Ways of Sin.

For Sin is a violence upon our Natures, and that is always uneasie, yet it is made more tolerable by Custom: but Religion restores Men to their natural State, and then we are at ease and rest. Religion is at first *a yoke and burthen*; but unless we *take this upon us*, we shall never *find rest to our Souls*.

4*thly* and *lastly*, consider the Reward that Religion propounds, and this must needs sweeten and mitigate all the Troubles and Difficulties that are occasioned by it. This *strait gate*, through which we must enter, and this *craggy way* which we are to climb up, *leads to life*; and he is a lazy man indeed, that will not strive and struggle for *Life*. All that a man can do, he will do for his Life, for this miserable Life, which is so short and uncertain, and *born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*; a Life not worth the having, nor worth the keeping with any great care and trouble, if it were not in order to a better and happier

happier life. But 'tis not this life which our Saviour means; that indeed were not worth all this striving for: 'Tis Eternal Life; a State of Perfect and endless Happiness; of *joys unspeakable and full of glory.* And who would not *not strive to enter in at that gate*, which leads to so much Felicity? Can a Man possibly take too much pains, be at too much trouble for a few Days, to be happy for ever? Vol. V.

So often as I consider what incredible Industry Men use for the Things of this Life, and to get a small Portion of this World, I am ready to conclude, That either Men do not Believe the Rewards of another World, or that they do not understand them; else they could not think much to be at the same pains for Heaven, that they can chearfully bestow for the obtaining of these Corruptible things. Can we be so unconscionable, as to think God unreasonable, when he offers Heaven and Everlasting Happiness to us, upon as easie Terms, as any thing in this World is ordinarily to be had? And are not we very foolish and unwise, to put away Eternal Life from us, when we may have it upon Terms so infinitely below the true worth and value of it?

Vol. V. I have now done with the *Three* Things which I propounded to ſpeak to from the firſt part of theſe Words, which are ſo many Arguments to enforce the Exhortation here in the Text; *to ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*, and to give all Diligence, by the courſe of a Holy and Virtuous life, to get to Heaven; and we may aſſure our ſelves, that nothing leſs than this will bring us thither. So our Saviour tells us, in the latter part of the Text; that *many ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* I proceed now to the

Second part of the Text; the Reaſon or Argument whereby this Exhortation is enforced; *Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate*; *for many, I ſay unto you, ſhall ſeek to enter in, and ſhall not be able.* Every *ſeeking* to *enter in* will not gain our admiſſion into Heaven; therefore there muſt be *ſtriving*: For Men may do many things in Religion, and make ſeveral faint Attempts to get to Heaven, and yet at laſt fall ſhort of it, for want of that earneſt Contention and Endeavour which is neceſſary to the attaining of it. We muſt make Religion our buſineſs and ſet about it with all our might, and perſevere and hold out in it, if ever we hope

hope to be admitted to Heaven; *for many ſhall ſeek to enter*, that ſhall be *ſhut out.*

Now what this *ſeeking* is, which is here oppoſed to *ſtriving to enter in at the ſtrait gate*, our Saviour declares after the Text, *v.* 25. *When once the Maſter of the Houſe is riſen up, and hath ſhut to the door; and ye begin to ſtand without, and knock at the door, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he ſhall anſwer and ſay unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then ſhall ye begin to ſay, we have eaten and drunk in thy Preſence, and thou haſt taught in our ſtreets; but he ſhall ſay, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me all ye workers of Iniquity.* St. *Matth.* mentions ſome other Pretences which they ſhould make; upon which they ſhould lay claim to Heaven, *Mat.* 7. 21, 22, 23. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will ſay unto me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not Propheſyed in thy Name? and in thy Name have caſt out Devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then will I profeſs unto them; I never knew you, depart*

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from me ye that work Iniquity. After all their seeking to enter in, and notwithstanding all these Pretences, they shall be shut out, and be for ever banisht from the Presence of God. This shall be their doom, which will be much the heavier, because of the disappointment of their confident expectation and hope. So St. *Luke* tells us, *v.* 28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth; when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God, and ye your selves thrust out. And they shall come from the East, and from the West, and from the North, and from the South, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.* To which St. *Matthew* adds, Chap. 8. v. 12. *But the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* And then our Saviour concludes (Luke 13. 30.) *Behold, there are last that shall be first, and first which shall be last.* From all which it appears, with what Confidence many Men, upon these false Pretences (which our Saviour calls *seeking to enter in*) shall lay claim to Heaven, and how strangely they shall be disappointed of their expectation and hope; when they shall find themselves ca

cast out of Heaven, who they thought had out-done all others in Religion, and were the only Members of the true Church, and *the Children and Heirs of the Kingdom*; and shall see others, whom they thought to be out of the Pale of the true Church, and excluded from all terms of Salvation, come from all Quarters, and find free Admission into Heaven; and shall find themselves so grosly and widely mistaken, that those very Persons, whom they thought to be *last*, and of all others fartheſt from Salvation, shall be *first*; and they themselves, whom they took for *the Children of the Kingdom*, and such as should be admitted into Heaven in the first place, shall be rejected and cast out.

So that by *seeking to enter*, we may understand all those things which Men may do in Religion, upon which they shall pretend to lay claim to Heaven, nay and confidently hope to obtain it; and yet shall be shamefully disappointed, and fall short of it. Whatever Men think, and believe, and do in Religion, what Priviledges soever Men pretend, what Ways and Means soever Men endeavour to appease the Deity, and to recommend themselves to the Divine Favour and

Acceptance, all this is but *seeking to enter in*, and is not that *striving* which our Saviour requires. *If Men do not do the will of God, but are workers of Iniquity*, it will all signifie nothing to the obtaining of Eternal Happiness.

Our Saviour here instanceth in Mens Profession of his Religion, *calling him Lord, Lord*; in their personal Familiarity and Conversation with him, by *eating and drinking in his Presence* and Company; in their having heard him preach the Doctrine of Life and Salvation, *thou hast taught in our streets*; in their having propheſied, and wrought great Miracles in his Name and by his Power, *Have we not propheſied in thy Name? and in thy Name cast out devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works?* These were great and glorious Things which they boasted of; and yet nothing of all this will do, if Men *do not the Will of God*; notwithstanding all this, he will say unto them, *I know ye not whence ye are, depart from me, ye workers of Iniquity.*

And by a plain Parity of Reason, whatever else Men do in Religion, what Attempts soever Men may make to get to Heaven, upon what Priviledges or Pretences soever they may lay claim to eternal

eternal Life, they will certainly fall short of it, if they *do not do the will of God*, but *are workers of Iniquity*. My business therefore at this time shall be, to discover the several false Claims and Pretences which Men may make to Heaven, and yet shall never enter into it. And to this purpose, I shall instance in several Particulars, by one or more of which, Men commonly delude themselves, and are apt to entertain vain and ill-grounded hopes of eternal Salvation.

1*st*, Some trust to the external Profession of the true Religion.

2*dly*, Others have attained to a good degree of Knowledge in Religion, and they rely much upon that.

3*dly*, There are others that find themselves much affected with the Word of God, and the Doctrines contained in it.

4*thly*, Others are very strict and devout in the external Worship of God.

5*thly*, Others confide much in their being Members of the only true Church, in which alone Salvation is to be had, and in the manifold Priviledges and Advantages which therein they have above others of getting to Heaven.

6*thly*, Others think their great Zeal for God, and his true Religion, will certainly save them.

7*thly*, Others go a great way in the real Practice of Religion.

8*thly*, Others rely much upon the Sincerity of their Repentance and Conversion, whereby they are put into a state of Grace, and become the Children of God, and Heirs of everlasting Life; and being once truly so, they can never fall from that State, so as finally to miscarry.

Lastly, Others venture all upon a Death-bed Repentance, and their Importunity with God to receive them to Mercy at the last.

I shall briefly go over these particulars, which are the several ways whereby Men *seek to enter* into Heaven, and hope to get thither at last; and shall shew the Insufficiency of them; and that there is something beyond all this necessary to be done for the attainment of Everlasting Salvation.

1*st*, Some trust to the mere external Profession of the true Religion, and think it enough to call Christ, *Lord, Lord*, to be baptized in his Name, and thereby to be admitted Members of the Christian Church. What the Apostle says of the Profession of the *Jewish* Religion, and the outward Badge of it, *Circumcision*, may be applyed to the Profession of Christianity

ſtianity made in Baptiſm, *Rom.* 2. 17, 25, 28, 29. *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and reſteſt in the Law, and makeſt thy boaſt of God. Circumciſion verily profiteth, if thou keep the Law; but if thou be a breaker of the Law, thy Circumciſion is made Uncircumciſion: For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, neither is that Circumciſion, which is outward in the Fleſh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and Circumciſion is that of the heart, in the ſpirit, and not in the letter.* The Caſe is the ſame of thoſe who make only an outward Profeſſion of Chriſtianity. *Baptiſm verily profitteth, if we perform the Condition of that Covenant which we entred into by Baptiſm*; but if we do not, *our Baptiſm is no Baptiſm:* For *he is not a Chriſtian, which is one outwardly, nor is that Baptiſm which is outward in the Fleſh; but he is a Chriſtian which is one inwardly, and Baptiſm is of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in Water only.* So St. *Peter* tells us, 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. that *Baptiſm is not* only the waſhing of the Body with Water, and *the putting away of the Filth of the Fleſh; but the anſwer of a good Conſcience towards God.*

The Promiſe of eternal Life and Happineſs is not made to the external Profeſſion

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Profession of Religion, without the sincere and real Practice of it. *Why call ye me, Lord, Lord,* (says our Saviour) *and do not the things which I say?* The Scripture hath no where said, *he that is baptised shall be saved*; but *he that believeth and is baptised, he that repenteth and is baptised, shall be saved.* This deserves to be seriously considered by a great many Christians, who have nothing to shew for their Christianity, but their Names; whose best Title to Heaven is their Baptism, an Engagement entred into by others in their Name, but never confirmed and made good by any Act of their own; a thing which was done before they remember, and which hath no other effect upon their Hearts and Lives, than if it were quite forgotten.

2*dly*, There are others who have attained to a good degree of Knowledge in Religion, and they hope *that* will save them. But if our Knowledge in Religion, though never so clear and great, do not descend into our Hearts and Lives, and govern our Actions, all our hopes of Heaven are built upon a false and sandy Foundation. So our Saviour tells us, *Matth.* 7. 26. *Every one that heareth these Sayings of mine, and doth them not,*

not, ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh Man, which built his Houſe upon the Sand. And *John* 13. 17. *If ye know theſe things, happy are ye, if ye do them.*

There is not a greater Cheat in Religion, nothing wherein Men do more groſly impoſe upon themſelves, than in this matter, as if the Knowledge of Religion, without the Practice of it, would bring Men to Heaven. How diligent are many in reading and hearing the Word of God, who yet take no care to practiſe it in their Lives? Like thoſe in the Prophet, *Ezek.* 33. 31. of whom God complains, *They come unto thee as the People cometh, and they ſit before thee as my People, and they hear my Words; but they will not do them.* None do ſo fooliſhly, and yet ſo deſervedly miſs of Happineſs, as thoſe who are very careful to learn the way to Heaven, and when they have done, will take no pains at all to get thither.

3*dly*, There are others who find themſelves much affected with the Word of God, and the Preaching of it; and this they take for a very good Sign, that it hath its due effect upon them. And this happens very frequently, that the Word of God makes conſiderable Impreſſions upon

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upon Men for the present, and they are greatly affected with it, and troubled for their Sins, and afraid of the Judgments of God, and the terrible Vengeance of another World; and upon this they take up some Resolutions of a better Course, which after a little while vanish and come to nothing. This was the Temper of the People of *Israel*, they delighted to hear the Prophet speak to them in the Name of God, *Ezek.* 33. 32. *And loe, thou art unto them as a very lovely Song of one that hath a pleasant Voice, and can play well upon an Instrument; for they hear thy words, but they do them not.* Mark 6.20. it is said that *Herod* had a great reverence for *John* the Baptist, *that he observed him, and heard him gladly*; but yet for all that, he continued the same cruel and bad Man that he was before. And in the Parable of the Sower, *Matth.* 13. 20. there are one sort of Hearers mention'd, who, *when they heard the word, received it with joy; but having no root in themselves, they endured but for a while, and when Tribulation or Persecution ariseth, because of the Word, presently they are offended.* There are many Men who have sudden Motions in Religion, and are mightily affected for the present: but it must be a rooted

rooted and fixt Principle that will endure, and hold out against great Difficulties and Opposition. *Acts* 24. 25. it is said, that when *St. Paul reasoned of Righteousness, and Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled*; and nothing is more frequent, than for Men to be mightily startled at the Preaching of the Word, when their Judgments are convinced and born down, and their Consciences touched to the quick; a lively representation of the Evil of Sin, and the infinite Danger of a sinful Course, may stir up the Passions of Grief and Fear, and dart such stings into the Consciences of Men, as may make them extremely restless and unquiet, and work some good Thoughts and Inclinations in them towards a better Course; and yet like Metals, when the heat is over, they may be the harder for having been melted down.

4*thly*, Others shew great Strictness and Devotion in the Worship of God, and this they hope will be accepted, and can not fail to bring them to Heaven: and yet some of the worst of Men have been very eminent for this. The *Pharisees* were the most exact People in the World in matter of external Ceremony and Devotion;

votion; and yet for all this, our Saviour plainly tells them, that *they were farther from the Kingdom of God*, than those who seemed to be fartheſt, *than Publicans and Harlots*; and that becauſe they were ſo very bad, under ſo great a pretence of Devotion, *therefore they ſhould receive the greater Damnation*.

Not but that External Devotion is a neceſſary expreſſion of Religion, and highly acceptable to God, when it proceeds from a pious and devout Mind, and when Men are really ſuch in their Hearts and Lives, as their external Devotion repreſents them to be: But when the outward Garb of Religion is only made a Cloak for Sin and Wickedneſs, when there is nothing within to anſwer all the Shew that we ſee without, nothing is more odious and abominable to God. Theſe are mere Engins and Puppits in Religion, all the Motions we ſee without proceed from an artificial Contrivance, and not from any inward Principle of Life; and as no Creature is more ridiculous than an Ape, becauſe the Beaſt makes ſome pretence to human Shape; ſo nothing is more fulſome than this hypocritical Devotion, becauſe it looks

looks like Religion, but is the fartheſt from it of any thing in the World.

5*thly*, Others confide very much in their being Members of the only true Church, in which alone Salvation is to be had, and in the manifold Priviledges and Advantages which they have thereby above others, of getting to Heaven. Thus the *Jews* confined Salvation to themſelves, and looked upon all the reſt of the World as excluded from it. And not only ſo, but they believed that by one means or other every *Iſraelite* ſhould be ſaved. So that they were the *Jewiſh* Catholick Church, out of which there was no hope of Salvation for any.

The ſame Pretence is made by ſome Chriſtians at this day, who engroſs Salvation to themſelves, and will allow none to go to Heaven out of the Communion of their Church; and have ſo ordered the matter, that hardly any that are in it can miſcarry. They are Members of an infallible Church, which cannot poſſibly err in Matters of Faith, *they have* not only *eat and drunk in Chriſt's preſence*, but have eat and drunk his very Corporal Preſence, the natural Subſtance of his Fleſh and Blood; they have not only our bleſſed Saviour, but innumerable

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merable other Interceſſors in Heaven; they have not only their own Merits to plead for them, but in caſe they be defective, they may have the Merits of others aſſigned and made over to them, out of the infinite Stock and Treaſure of the Church, upon which they may challenge Eternal Life, as of right and due belonging to them; and by a due courſe of Confeſſion and Abſolution, may quit ſcores with God for all their Sins from time to time. Or if they have neglected all this, they may, after the moſt flagitious courſe of Life, upon *Attrition* (that is, upon ſome Trouble for Sin, out of fear of Hell and Damnation) joyned with *Confeſſion*, and *Abſolution*, get to Heaven at laſt; provided the Prieſt mean honeſtly, and do not for want of Intention, deprive them of the ſaving Benefit and Effect of this Sacrament.

But is it poſſible Men can be deluded at this Rate! as to think that Confidence of their own good Condition, and want of Charity to others, will carry them to Heaven? That any Church hath the Priviledge to ſave impenitent Sinners? And they are really impenitent, who do not exerciſe ſuch a Repentance, as the Goſpel plainly requires; and if Men die in-

in this state, whatever Church they are of, the great Judge of the World hath told us, that *he will not know them*, but will bid them *to depart from him, because they have been Workers of Iniquity.*

6thly, Others think that their Zeal for God and his true Religion will certainly save them. But Zeal, if it be not *according to Knowledge*, if it be mistaken in its Object, or be irregular and excessive in the degree, is so far from being a Virtue, that it may be a great Sin and Fault; and tho' it be for the Truth, yet if it be destitute of Charity, and separated from the Virtues of a good Life, it will not avail us. So St. *Paul* tells us, that *tho' a Man should give his Body to be burnt; yet if he have not Charity, it is nothing.*

7thly, Others go a great way in the real Practice of Religion, and this sure will do the business. And it is very true, and certain in experience, that Religion may have a considerable Awe and Influence upon Men's Hearts and Lives, and yet they may fall short of Happiness. Men may in many considerable Instances perform their Duty to God and Man; and yet the retaining of one Lust, the practice of any one known Sin, may hin-

der them from *entring in at the strait* Vol. V.
Gate. Herod did not only *hear John gladly*, but *did many things* in Obedience to his Doctrine; and yet he was a very bad Man. The *Pharisee thanked God* (and it may be truly) *that he was not like other Men, an extortioner, or unjust, or an adulterer*; and yet the penitent *Publican* was *justified before him*. The young Man who came to our Saviour to know what he should do to enter into Life, and of whom our Saviour testifies, that he was *not far from the Kingdom of God*, and that he *wanted but one thing*; yet for want of that he miscarried. And St. *James* assures us, that *if a Man keep the whole Law, and yet fail in one point, he is guilty of all.* If we be *workers of Iniquity* in any one kind Christ will disown us, and bid us *depart from him.*

8thly, Others rely upon the Sincerity of their Repentance and Conversion, whereby they are put into a state of Grace, from whence they can never finally fall. They did once very heartily repent of their wicked Lives, and did change their Course, and were really reformed, and continued a great while in that good Course. And all this may be certainly true; but it is as certain that

they

they are relapsed into their former evil Course: And if so, the Prophet hath told us their Doom, that *if the righteous Man forsake his Righteousness, his Righteousness shall not be remembred; but in the Sin that he hath sinned, in that shall he die.* So that a *Righteous Man* may *turn from his Righteousness, and commit Iniquity and dye in it.* For the Prophet doth not here (as some vainly pretend) put a case, which is impossible in Fact should happen, unless they will say, that the other Case which he puts together with it, of *the wicked Mans turning away from his wickedness, and doing that which is lawful and right*, is likewise impossible, which God forbid. And that Men may fall from a state of Grace is no matter of Discouragement to good Men; but a good caution against Security, and an Argument to greater Care and Watchfulness, according to that of the Apostle, *Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall*; which Admonition were surely to little purpose, if it were impossible for them that *stand* to *fall.*

Lastly, Others venture all upon a Death-bed Repentance, and their Importunity with God to receive them to Mercy at last. This indeed is only *to seek*, and

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not *to strive to enter in*; and these perhaps are they whom our Saviour represents as *standing without*, and *knocking at the door, saying Lord, Lord, open unto us*; Or as St. *Matthew* expresseth it, *Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,* which is most probably meant of the day of Judgment, when their Case is brought to the last extremity; and next to that is the day of Death, when Men are entring into a state of endless Happiness or Misery. And no wonder, if the Sinner would then be glad, when he can no longer continue in this World, to be admitted into Happiness in the next: but the Door is then shut to most Sinners, and it is a Miracle of God's Grace and Mercy, if any Repentance that Men can then exercise, (which at the best must needs be very confused and imperfect) will then be accepted; if any Importunity which Men can then use, will be available. For with what Face can we expect, that after all the evil Actions of a long Life, God should be mollified toward us by a few good Words, and accept of a forc'd and constrained Repentance for all our wilful and deliberate Crimes, and that he should forgive us all our Sins upon a little Importunity, when

when we can sin no longer, and would repent no sooner.

Let us then by all that hath been said, be effectually perswaded to mind the business of Religion in good earnest, and with all our might, especially the Practice of it, in the exercise of all the Graces and Virtues of a good Life. Let us heartily repent of all the Sins of our past Life, and resolve upon a better course for the future; and let us not delay and put off this necessary Work to the most unfit and improper time of old Age, and Sickness, and Death: but let us set about it presently, and enter upon a good Course, and make all the Speed and Progress in it we can.

And let us remember, that whatever we do in Religion will not bring us to Heaven, if we do not *do the will of our Father which is in Heaven*; if we do not give up our selves to a constant and universal Obedience of his Laws. This is *to strive to enter in at the strait Gate*: And tho' we *strive to enter in* a Thousand other Ways, we *shall not be able*; and after all our Confidence and Conceit of our selves, and our own Righteousness, and Security of our Salvation from the Priviledges of any Church, it will be a strange

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Damp and Disappointment to us, to see the sincere Christians, who have done the Will of God, and lived in Obedience to his Laws, to come from all quarters, and Churches in the World, and *sit down with Abraham, Isaac*, and *Jacob in the Kingdom of God*, when we who thought our selves *the Children of the Kingdom, shall be cast out*, because we have been *Workers of Iniquity*. I will conclude all with those plain Words of the Apostle, *Rom.* 2. 7, 8, 9. *To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and Immortality; eternal Life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation, and anguish upon every Soul of Man that doth evil; in the day when God shall judge the Secrets of Men by Jesus Christ according to the Gospel.*

SERMON

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SERMON X.

The Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*.

Sermon I.

LUKE XVI. 19, 20.

There was a certain Rich Man, which was cloathed in Purple and fine Linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain Beggar, named Lazarus, *which was laid at his Gate full of Sores.*

I Intend by God's Assistance to go over this Parable, than which I think there is none in the whole Gospel, which is more apt to affect Men, or which is more artificially contrived, and in the Circumstances whereof a greater *Decorum* is observed.

It is a great Question among Interpreters, whether this Narration concerning the Rich Man and *Lazarus* be a Parable,

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rable, or a Hiſtory, or a mixture of both. That it is not a Hiſtory, the reſemblance between it, and others of our Saviour's Parables, will eaſily convince any Man that is not contentious; beſides that, in ſome ancient Copies, 'tis uſher'd in with this Preface, *And he ſpake a Parable to his Diſciples, A certain Rich Man*, &c.

But yet, as ſome of the Ancients have not improbably conjectur'd, it ſeems to be ſuch a kind of Parable, as had ſomething of a real Foundation; as namely, that there was ſuch a poor Man as *Lazarus* is here deſcribed, and of that Name among the *Jews*: For in a meer Parable 'tis altogether unuſual to name Perſons, nor is this done in any other of our Saviour's Parables.

But whether this be ſo or not, is not worth the diſputing, becauſe it alters not the caſe as to our Saviour's purpoſe, and the Inſtructions which we may learn from it.

In the handling of this Parable, I ſhall explain it as I go along, and draw *two* ſorts of Inſtructions or Obſervations from it.

The *Firſt* ſort of Obſervations ſhall be from the Circumſtances which ſerve for the *Decorum* of the Parable: And theſe

theſe I will not warrant to be all intended by our Saviour; but only to be true in themſelves and uſeful, and to have a probable riſe from ſome Circumſtances of the Parable; and therefore I ſhall ſpeak but very briefly to them. Vol. V.

The *Second* ſort of Obſervations ſhall be ſuch, as are grounded upon the main Scope and Intent of the Parable; and theſe I ſhall inſiſt more largely upon. I begin,

Firſt, With thoſe Obſervations and Inſtructions which I ſhall gather up from the Circumſtances which ſerve for the *Decorum* of the Parable; and I ſhall take them in order as they lie in the Parable.

Ver. 19. *There was a certain Rich Man, which was cloathed in purple and fine linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly every Day.* Some think that our Saviour in this deſcription reflected upon *Herod*, becauſe he deſcribes this Rich Man to be *cloathed in Purple.* But this Conjecture is without reaſon; for beſides that, it was not our Saviour's Cuſtom in his Preaching, to give ſecret Girds to the Magiſtrate; 'tis certain that it was long after our Saviour's time, that Purple was appropriated to Kings. It was then, and a great while after, the wear of rich and pow-

erful

erful Men, and of the Favourites and great Men of the Court, who are frequently in ancient Histories call'd the *Purpurati*, those that wore Purple.

That which I observe from hence, is, that the rich Man is not here censured for enjoying what he had, for wearing rich Apparel, and keeping a great Table. This of it self, if it be according to a Man's Estate and Quality, and without intemperance, is so far from being a fault, that it is a commendable virtue. But here was his Fault, that he made all to serve his own Sensuality and Luxury, without any consideration of the Wants and Necessities of others: Whereas, one of the great Uses of the plentiful Tables of Rich Men, is from the superfluity of them to feed the Poor and the hungry.

Ver. 20. *And there was a certain Beggar named* Lazarus; as if our Saviour had said, for instance, poor *Lazarus* whom ye all knew. And here I cannot but take notice of the Decorum which our Saviour uses. He would not name any Rich Man, because that was invidious, and apt to provoke. He endeavours to make all Men sensible of their Duty; but he would provoke none of them by any

any peevish Reflection; for nothing is more improper than to provoke those whom we intend to perswade. While a Man's Reason is calm and undisturbed, it is capable of Truth fairly propounded; but if we once stir up Men's Passions, it is like muddying of the Waters, they can discern nothing clearly afterwards. But to proceed in the Parable.

There was a certain Beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at the Rich Man's gate full of Sores, and was desirous to be fed with the crumbs which fell from his Table, moreover the Dogs came and licked his sores. Here are *three* great Aggravations of the Rich Man's uncharitableness.

1*st*, That here was an Object presented it self to him.

2*dly*, Such an Object as would move any ones Pity, a Man reduced to extream Misery and Necessity.

3*dly*, A little Relief would have contented him.

1*st*, Here was an Object presented it self to him, *Lazarus* laid at the Rich Mans Gate; so that so often as he went out of his own House and came in, he could not but take notice of him. Good Men that are charitably disposed, will enquire out Objects for their Charity, and not always

ways ſtay 'till they thruſt themſelves upon them: But he is a very bad Man, who, when an Object of great Pity and Charity is preſented, is ſo far from relenting towards him, that he ſtops his Ear to his Cry, and turns away his Face from him. He is an uncharitable Man, who being Rich, and hearing of the Miſeries of others, does not take them into Conſideration: But what we ſee with our Eyes is much more apt to affect us. So that this was an Argument of a very cruel diſpoſition in the Rich Man, that having ſo many Occaſions of ſeeing *Lazarus*, he ſhould never be moved to commiſerate him.

2dly, Here was ſuch an Object preſented to him, as would move any ones Pity, a Man reduced to extream Miſery and Neceſſity. Here was no common Object of Charity, a Man, not only in extream Want, but in great Pain and Anguiſh, and ſo helpleſs, that he was unable to keep off the Dogs from being troubleſome to him. And yet this did not move him.

3dly, A very little Relief would have contented this Poor Man, and have been a great Kindneſs to him; that which the Rich Man might have ſpared without

out the leaſt Prejudice to himſelf. He would have been glad to have been *fed with the crumbs which fell from the Rich Man's table*; and yet the Parable intimates, that the Rich Man was ſo hard-hearted, as not to afford him theſe. Vol. V.

Ver. 22. *And it came to paſs that the Beggar died, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's boſom.* Here was a great and ſudden Change! He, who when he was alive was neglected by Men, and contumeliouſly expoſed like a dead Carcaſs to the Dogs, when he dies, is attended on by the Angels, and by them ſafely conveyed into a ſtate of unſpeakable Happineſs. He, who lay at the Rich Man's Gate, and could find no entrance there, is admitted into Heaven. *The Beggar died, and was carried into Abraham's boſom.*

'Tis very obſervable, that our Saviour in this Parable repreſents Men as paſſing immediately out of this Life into a ſtate of Happineſs or Torment. And as in no other place of Scripture, ſo neither in this, where it had been ſo proper, does our Saviour give the leaſt Intimation of the ſtate of *Purgatory*, which the Church of *Rome* hath deviſed, and makes ſo much Profit and Advantage of, which,

which, because it is so visible and apparent, we may without Uncharitableness suppose to be the reason why they keep such a stir about it.

And was carried by the Angels into Abraham's bosom. It was an ancient Tradition among the *Jews*, that the Angels did attend good Men at their Death, and carry their Souls into *Paradise*, which is here call'd *Abraham's bosom*. And this was a proper place for *Lazarus*, who had been neglected by the Rich Man; to be conveyed into *Abraham*'s Bosom, who was of a quite contrary temper, and loved to entertain and relieve Strangers.

And *Paradise* is fitly call'd *Abraham's bosom*, because the *Jews* had so great a Veneration for *Abraham*, and that deservedly for his eminent Faith and Obedience, that they gave him the first place among the blessed. Hence is the Expression, *Matth.* 8. 11. of *sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God.* Now this Expression of *being in Abraham's bosom*, is an Allusion to the Custom of Feasts among the *Jews*, where the most esteemed and beloved Guest sat next him that was chief at the Feast, and leaned on his Bosom

ſom. Hence St. *John* is call'd the Diſciple whom *Jeſus* loved, becauſe when he ſat at Meat, he leaned on his Boſom, *John* 13. 23. Hence likewiſe is the Expreſſion of our Saviour's being *in the Boſom of his Father*, to ſignifie his dearneſs to him, *John* 1. 18. *No Man hath ſeen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the boſom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

I proceed. *The Rich Man alſo died, and was buried. The Rich Man alſo died*; this is very elegant and emphatical, inſinuating to us, what the Scripture ſo often takes notice of, that Riches, for all Men's confidence in them, will not deliver from Death. This Rich Man indeed was out of Danger of being ſtarved and famiſht, as poor *Lazarus* was; But Death had other ways to come at him. It is probable enough, that he might be ſurfeted by *faring ſumptouſly every day. The Rich Man alſo died.*

And was buried. And here again we may obſerve the ſtrict *Decorum* which our Saviour uſes in this Parable. It is not ſaid of *Lazarus*, that *he was buried*, but only that *he died*; it is probable that he was flung out of the way into ſome Pit or other: But of the Rich Man it is ſaid,

he

he was buried. And this is all the Advantage which a Rich Man hath by a great Estate after he is dead, to have a pompous and solemn Funeral; which yet signifies nothing to him after Death, because he is insensible of it.

Ver. 23. *And in Hell he lift up his Eyes being in Torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and* Lazarus *in his bosom.* As corporal Acts are attributed to God in Scripture, so likewise to separated Souls.

In Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments; Intimating to us, that this sensual and voluptuous Man had stupidly past away his Life without any serious Thoughts and Consideration: but now at last he was awakned, when it was too late, and began to consider. *In Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments.*

O the Stupidity of Sinners! who run on blindly in their Course, and never open their Eyes 'till they are fallen into the Pit; who cannot be brought to consider, 'till Consideration will do them no good; 'till it serve to no other purpose, but to enrage their Consciences, and to multiply the Stings of them.

Thus it was with this Rich Man, *he lift up his Eyes being in Torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

ſon. Our Saviour repreſents him as ſeeing that which would then moſt probably come to his Mind. Feeling his own Miſery, he began to conſider the happy Condition of the poor Man whom he had ſo cruelly neglected. And indeed one great part of the Torment of Hell conſiſts in thoſe Reflections, which Men ſhall make upon the Happineſs which they have wilfully loſt and neglected, and the Sins whereby they have plunged themſelves into that miſerable State.

Ver. 24. *And he cried, and ſaid, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and ſend Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his Finger in Water, and cool my Tongue; for I am tormented in this Flame.* See how the Scene is changed; now he is fain to beg Relief of the Beggar, who had ſued to him in vain.

Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his Finger in Water, and cool my Tongue. Here is another very decent Circumſtance; the Rich Man is repreſented as not having the Face to beg any great Relief from *Lazarus*, towards whom he had been ſo hard-hearted. *To dip the tip of his Finger in Water, to cool his Tongue*, had been a very great Favour from *Lazarus*, to whom the Rich Man

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had denyed even *the Crumbs which fell from his Table.*

For I am tormented in this Flame. The Scripture loves to make uſe of ſenſible Repreſentations, to ſet forth to us the Happineſs and Miſery of the next Life; partly by way of Condeſcention to our Underſtandings, and partly to work more powerfully upon our Affections. For whilſt we are in the Body, and immerſt in Senſe, we are moſt apt to be moved by ſuch Deſcriptions of things as are ſenſible; and therefore the Torments of wicked Men in Hell, are uſually in Scripture deſcribed to us, by one of the quickeſt and ſharpeſt Pains that Human Nature is ordinarily acquainted withal, namely, by the pain of Burning; Fire being the moſt active thing in Nature, and therefore capable of cauſing the ſharpeſt Pains.

But we cannot from theſe and the like Expreſſions of Scripture certainly determine that this is the true and proper Pain of Hell: All that we can infer from theſe Deſcriptions is this, that the Sufferings of wicked Men in the other World, ſhall be very terrible, and as great, and probably greater than can poſſibly be deſcribed to us by any thing that

that we are now acquainted withal; for who knows the Power of God's Anger, and the utmoſt of what Omnipotent Juſtice can do to Sinners? For as the Glory of Heaven, and the Joys of God's Preſence are now inconceivable; ſo likewiſe are the Torments of Hell, and the Miſeries of the Damned. *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the Heart of Man,* thoſe dreadful things *which God prepares for them that hate him.* Who can imagine the utmoſt ſignificancy of thoſe Phraſes which the Scripture uſes to ſet forth this to us, of God's being *a conſuming Fire,* of being *tormented in Flames,* of God's *Wrath and Jealouſie ſmoaking* againſt Sinners, and all the Curſes that are written in his Book, falling upon them? Who can conceive the Horror of thoſe Expreſſions of *the Worm that dies not,* and *the Fire that is not quenched,* of God's *pouring out the Vials of his Wrath,* of being *deliver'd over to the Tormentor,* of being *thruſt into utter Darkneſs,* of being *caſt into the Lake of Fire and Brimſtone*? Theſe forms of Speech ſeem to be borrowed from thoſe things which among Men are moſt dreadful and affrighting, and to be calculated and accommodated to our Capa-

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cities, and not ſo much intended to expreſs to us the proper and real Torments of Hell, as to convey to us in a more ſenſible and affecting manner the ſenſe of what the Scripture ſays in general, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Ver. 25. *But Abraham ſaid, Son remember that thou in thy life time receiveds thy good things, and likewiſe Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Abraham ſaid, Son, remember.* It is very obſervable, how our Saviour chuſes to repreſent to us the diſcourſe between *Abraham* and the Rich Man; tho' there was the greateſt difference between them imaginable, the one was in Heaven, and the other in Hell, yet they treated one another civilly. *Abraham* is brought in giving the common terms of Civility to this wretched wicked Man, and calling him *Son*; *Son remember.* It was indeed a very ſevere thing which he ſaid to him, he put him in mind of his former Proſperity, and of his Fault in his unmerciful Uſage of *Lazarus*; *Remember Son, that thou in thy life time receiveds thy good things, and Lazarus*, &c. But yet whilſt he ſpeaks ſuch ſharp things to him, he 'bates bad Language.

guage. A Man may ſay very ſevere things, where a juſt Occaſion requires it; but he muſt uſe no reviling; *rem ipſam dic, mitte malè loqui*, ſay the thing, but uſe no bad Language. And this, as one ſays, is the true art of Chiding, the proper Stile wherein we muſt uſe to reprove. If we do it with Malice, and Anger, and Contempt, it is misbecoming, even tho' we deſpair of doing good: but if we hope for any good Effect, we are like to miſs of it this way; for as the Apoſtle ſays excellently, *the wrath of Man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.*

Some think that *Abraham* gives the Rich Man the Title of *Son* ironically, and by way of Jeer: but without all reaſon. For ſurely there is not ſo much bad Nature in Heaven, as to ſcoff at thoſe who are in Miſery. Beſides that we find our Saviour obſerving this Decorum of good Language in other of his Parables; as particularly, in that of the King who invited Gueſts to the Marriage of his Son, *Matth.* 22. 11. When the King ſaw there the Man, that came without his wedding Garment, tho' he paſt a very ſevere Sentence upon him, yet he gives him the common terms of Civility; *Friend, how cameſt thou hither?*

This ſhould teach us Chriſtians, how we ought to demean our ſelves towards thoſe who are at the greateſt diſtance from us, and how we ought to behave our ſelves towards one another in the greateſt Differences of Religion. None ſure can be at greater diſtance, than *Abraham* in *Paradiſe*, and the Rich Man in *Hell*; and yet our Saviour would not repreſent them as at terms of Defiance with one another. One might have expected that *Abraham* ſhould have reviled this poor Wretch, and diſdain'd to have ſpoken to him: But this is not the Temper of Heaven, nor ought it to be of good Men upon Earth, even towards the worſt of Men.

How does this condemn our Rudeneſs and Impatience with one another in our religious Differences! We think no Terms bad enough to uſe towards one another: and yet one of the moſt famous Diſputes that we find mentioned in Scripture, and *that* between the moſt oppoſite Parties that can be imagined, was managed after another Faſhion; I mean *that* recorded by St. *Jude* between *Michael* the Arch-Angel, and the Devil, *v.* 9. *Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the Devil, he diſputed about the Body of*

of Moſes, durſt not bring a railing Accuſation, he durſt not allow himſelf this, no not in the heat of Diſpute, when Perſons are moſt apt to fly out into Paſſion, becauſe it was indecent, and would have been diſpleaſing to God; this I believe is the true reaſon why it is ſaid, *he durſt not bring a railing Accuſation.* And yet I may add another, which is not improper for our Conſideration, I am ſure it hath a good Moral; the Devil would have been too hard for him at railing, he was better skill'd at that Weapon, and more expert at that kind of Diſpute. Vol. V.

Which Conſideration may be a good Argument to us againſt reviling any Man. If we revile the good, we are unjuſt, becauſe they deſerve it not: if we revile the bad, we are unwiſe, becauſe we ſhall get nothing by it. I could almoſt envy the Character which was given of one of the *Romans*; *Neſcivit quid eſſet malè dicere, he knew not what it was to give bad Language.*

I proceeed. *Son, remember that thou in thy Life time receivedſt thy good things. Thy good things*, thoſe which thou didſt value and eſteem ſo highly, and didſt place thy chief Happineſs in, as if there had been no other good to be ſought after.

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Thy good things, and indeed ſo he uſed them, as if he had been the ſole Lord and Proprietor of them, and they had not been committed to him, as a Steward, to be diſpenſed for his Maſter's uſe, for the cloathing of the naked, and the feeding of the hungry, and the relieving of thoſe in diſtreſs.

Ver. 27, 28. *Then he ſaid, I pray thee therefore Father, that thou wouldeſt ſend him to my Father's houſe: For I have five Brethren; that he may teſtifie unto them, leſt they alſo come into this place of Torment.* Here the Rich Man, tho' in Hell, is repreſented as retaining ſome tenderneſs for his Relations, as ſolicitous leſt they ſhould be involved in the ſame Miſery with himſelf. The laſt piece of that which commonly remains in Men, is natural Affection, which is not ſo much a Virtue, as a natural Principle, and is common to many brute Beaſts. When a Man puts off this, we may give him up for loſt to all manner of Goodneſs. To be *without natural Affection*, is the worſt Character can be given of a Man. Our Saviour repreſents this Rich Man in Hell as not ſo totally degenerate as to be quite deſtitute of this.

I think ſome attribute this Motion of the

the Rich Man concerning his Brethren to another Cauſe; as if he had deſired it, not out of kindneſs to them, but out of regard to himſelf, as being afraid that if his Brethren, who probably were corrupted by his Example, had periſht by that means, it would have been an Aggravation of his Torments. But this Conjecture is too ſubtile, and without any good ground; for every Man carries his Burthen of Guilt with him out of this World, and it is not increaſed by any Conſequence of our Actions here. For the Crime of a bad Example is the ſame, whether Men follow it or not, becauſe he that gives bad Example to others, does what in him lies to draw them into Sin; and if they do not follow it, that is no mitigation of his Fault.

I have but one Obſervation more, and that is from the mention of his *Brethren* as his neareſt Relations, which is a great Aggravation of the Rich-Man's Uncharitableneſs, becauſe he is repreſented as having no Children to take care for, and yet he would not conſider the Poor.

And thus I have, as briefly as I could, endeavour'd to explain this Parable, and have made ſuch Obſervations from the Circumſtances of it, as may be uſeful for

our

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Inſtruction. But as I premiſed at firſt, I will not warrant all theſe Obſervations to be certainly intended by our Saviour; I know very well that every Circumſtance of a Parable is not to be preſt too far, the Moral Accommodation does chiefly belong to the main Scope of it, and many Circumſtances are only brought in to fill up the Parable, and to make handſomer way for that which is moſt material, and principally intended: But ſo long as the Obſervations are true and uſeful, and have a fair Colour and Occaſion from the Circumſtances, it is well enough; to be ſure there is no harm done. I proceed to the *ſecond* ſort of Obſervations, namely, ſuch as are drawn from the main ſcope and intent of the Parable, which I promiſed to ſpeak more largely to; and they are *Six*, which I ſhall handle in order.

Firſt, I obſerve that Uncharitableneſs and Unmercifulneſs to the Poor, is a great and damning Sin. We find no other fault imputed to the Rich Man but this, that he took no care out of his Superfluity and Abundance to relieve this poor Man that lay at his Gate. He is not charged for want of Juſtice, but of Charity; not for having got a great Eſtate

ſtate by Fraud or Oppreſſion, but that in the midſt of this Abundance he had no Conſideration and Pity for thoſe that were in want. Vol. V

I ſhall endeavour to make out this Obſervation by the parts of it.

1*ſt*, That Unmercifulneſs and Uncharitableneſs to the Poor is a great Sin.

2*dly*, Such a Sin, as alone and without any other guilt, is ſufficient to ruin a Man for ever. I ſhall ſpeak to theſe ſeverally.

1*ſt*, That Unmercifulneſs and Uncharitableneſs to the Poor is a very great Sin. It contains in its very Nature two black Crimes, Inhumanity and Impiety.

1. Inhumanity; it is an Argrment of a cruel and ſavage Diſpoſition, not to pity thoſe that are in Want and Miſery. And he doth not truly pity the Miſeries of others, that doth not relieve them when he hath Ability and Oportunity in his Hands. Tenderneſs and Compaſſion for the Sufferings of others is a Virtue ſo proper to our Nature, that it is therefore call'd *Humanity*, as if it were eſſential to Human Nature, and as if without this, we did not deſerve the Name of Men. To ſee a Man like our ſelves, *bone of our bone, and fleſh of our*

our flesh, labouring under Want and Necessity, and yet not to be moved to commiserate him, this is a sign that we have put off our own Nature, otherwise we should pity the Sufferings of it in others. For when-ever we behold a Man like our own selves groaning under Want and prest with Necessity, and do not relent toward him, and are not ready to relieve him, we are hard-hearted to our own Nature, and do in some sense what the Apostle says *no Man ever did* (that is, none retaining the Temper and Affections of a Man) *hate his own Flesh*.

This the Scripture speaks of as a most barbarous sort of Inhumanity, and calls it Murder, 1 *John* 3. 15. *Whoso hateth his Brother is a Murderer*; and not to relieve our Brother in want is *to hate* him; for this is the Instance which the Apostle gives at the 17*th. verse*, *Whoso hath this Worlds Goods, and seeth his Brother in want, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him*; whoso doth not consider the Poor, is a Man-slayer and a Murderer, he is cruel to his own Nature, nay were he sufficiently sensible of the Condition of Humane Nature, he is cruel to himself.

Seest thou a Poor Man in great Misery

ry and Want, there is nothing hath befallen him, but what is common to Man, what might have been thy Lot and Portion as well as his, and what may happen to thee or thine another time. Make it therefore thine own Case; (for so the Providence of God may make it one time or other, and thou provokest him to make it so speedily, by thy unmerciful Disposition toward the Poor;) I say, make it thine own case, if thou wert in the Poor Man's Condition, and he in thine, consult thine own Bowels, and tell me how thou wouldst wish him to be affected toward thee. Wouldst thou be willing that he should slight and repulse thee, and shut up his Bowels of Compassion from thee? If not, then do not thou deal so with him, consider that it may be thine own case, therefore do not thou give the World any bad Example in this kind, do not teach Men to be unmerciful, lest they learn of thee, and thou find the ill Effects of it, when it comes to be thine own Condition. This is the first Aggravation of this Sin, the Inhumanity of it. But, Vol. V.

2. Besides the Inhumanity of this Sin, it is likewise a great Impiety toward God. Unmercifulness to the Poor hath this

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this fourfold Impiety in it; it is a Contempt of God; an Uſurpation upon his Right; a ſlighting of his Providence; and a plain Demonſtration that we do not love God, and that all our Pretences to Religion are hypocritical and inſincere.

1. It is a Contempt of God, and a reproaching of him; ſo *Solomon* tells us, *Pro.* 14. 31. *He that oppreſſeth the Poor*, (not only he that dealeth unjuſtly with a Poor Man, but he that is uncharitable towards him, as appears by the Oppoſition, *but he that honoureth him hath Mercy on the Poor*; here Oppreſſion of the Poor is oppoſed to want of Charity towards him;) *He that oppreſſeth the Poor reproacheth his Maker*; how is that? He deſpiſeth God who made him after his own Image and Likeneſs: For the Poor Man bears the Image of God as well as the Rich; ſo that thou canſt not oppreſs or neglect him, without ſome reflection upon God, whoſe Image he bears.

2. The uncharitable Man is an Uſurper upon God's Right. *The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullneſs thereof*, and *he hath given it to the Children of Men*, not abſolutely to diſpoſe of as they pleaſe, but in truſt, and with certain reſerva-

reſervations, ſo as to be accountable to him for the diſpoſal of it. In reſpect of other Men, we are indeed true Proprietors of our Eſtates: but in reſpect of God, we are but Stewards; and he will call us to an Account how we have laid them out. So much as we need is ours; but beyond what will ſupport us, and be a convenient Proviſion for our Family, in the Rank wherein God hath placed us, all that is given to us, that we may give it to others. And if God hath been liberal to us in the Bleſſings of this Life, it is on purpoſe to give us an Oportunity, and to engage us to be ſo to others that ſtand in need of our Charity; and we are falſe to our Truſt, if we keep thoſe things to our ſelves, which we receive from God for this very end that we might diſtribute them to others, according to the proportion of our Ability and their Neceſſity. This is to hide our Lord's Talent in a Napkin, and that which thou ſtoreſt up in this Caſe is unjuſtly detained by thee; for God intended it ſhould have been for Bread for the hungry, and for Cloaths for the naked, for the Relief and Support of thoſe who were ready to periſh.

3. The uncharitable Man is impious in

in slighting of God's Providence. He does not consider that Riches and Poverty are of the Lord, that he can soon change our Condition, and that it is an easie thing with him to make a Rich Man poor. We do not sufficiently reverence the Providence which rules the World, if when God hath blest us with Plenty and Abundance, we have no pity and regard for those that are in need. God can soon turn the Wheel, and lay thee as low as the poor Man whom thou dost neglect. He can *cast down the mighty from their Seat, and exalt the humble and Meek; fill the hungry with good things, and send the rich empty away.*

God's Providence could easily have disposed of things otherwise, to have secured every Man from want: but he hath on purpose order'd this variety of Conditions, high and low, rich and poor, not that some Men might have an Advantage to insult over and despise others, but that there might be an Oportunity for the exercise of several Virtues; that the poor might have an Oportunity to exercise their Dependance upon God, and their Patience and Submission to his Will; and that the rich might show their Temperance, and Moderation, and Charity.

4. Un-

4. Unmercifulneſs to the Poor is a plain Demonſtration that we do not love God, and that all our other pretences to Religion are hypocritical and inſincere. St. *James* tells us, that *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and the Widow*, Ja. 1. 27. That *the Wiſdom which is from above is full of Mercy and good fruits*, ch. 3. 17. St. *John* repreſents this uncharitable Diſpoſition as utterly inconſiſtent with the true Love of God, 1 *John* 3. 17. *But whoſo hath this Worlds Goods, and ſeeth his Brother have need, and ſhutteth up his Bowels of Compaſſion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him?* In vain does ſuch a Man pretend to love God; nay *ch.* 4. *v.* 20. he tells us that it is impoſſible ſuch a Man ſhould love God. *If a Man ſay I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Lyar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* This deſerves to be ſerioſly conſider'd by thoſe who make a great ſhew of Devotion, and are at great pains in Prayer, and Faſting, and reading, and hearing the Word of God, and in all other frugal Exerciſes of Religion, which ſtand them in no Mony; leſt all their Labour be loſt for want of

this one neceſſary and eſſential part, leſt with the young Man in the Goſpel, after they have kept all other Commandments, they be rejected by Chriſt for lack of *this one thing*. I have done with the firſt part of the Obſervation, that Unmercifulneſs is a very great Sin. I proceed to the

2*d*, That it is ſuch a Sin, as alone, and without any other Guilt, is ſufficient to ruin a Man for ever. The Parable lays the Rich Man's Condemnation upon this; it was the guilt of this Sin that tormented him when he was in Hell. The Scripture is full of ſevere Threatnings againſt this Sin. *Prov.* 21. 13. *Whoſo ſtoppeth his Ears at the cry of the Poor, he alſo ſhall cry himſelf, but ſhall not be heard.* God will have no regard or pity for the Man that regardeth not the Poor. That is a terrible Text, *Ja.* 2. 13. *He ſhall have Judgment without Mercy, that hath ſhewed no Mercy.*

Our Saviour hath two Parables to repreſent to us the Danger of this Sin; this here in the Text, and that in *Luke* 12. concerning the Covetous Man that enlarged his Barns, and was ſtill laying up, but laid nothing out upon the Poor; upon which our Saviour makes this Obſervation,

ſervation, which is the Moral of the Parable, *v.* 21. *So is he that layeth up Treaſure for himſelf, and is not rich towards God*; So ſhall he be, ſuch an iſſue of his Folly may every one expect, who layeth up Treaſure for himſelf, but does not lay up Riches with God. How is that? The Scripture tells us, by Works of Mercy and Charity; this our Saviour calls *laying up for our ſelves Treaſures in Heaven*, *Matth.* 6. 20. And *Luke* 12. 33. he calls giving of Alms, *providing for our ſelves Bags that wax not old, a Treaſure in Heaven that faileth not.*

There is no particular Grace and Virtue to which the Promiſe of eternal Life is ſo frequently made in Scripture, as to this of Mercy and Charity to the Poor. *Matth.* 5. 7. *Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall find Mercy.* Which Promiſe, as it does not exclude a Reward in this World, ſo it ſeems principally to reſpect the Mercy of God at the great Day. *Luke* 14. 12, 13, 14. *When thou makeſt a Feaſt, invite not the Rich, for they will recompence thee again: but invite the Poor, and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind, for they cannot recompenſe thee; but thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the Reſurrection of the Juſt.* Luke 16. 9. *Make*

therefore to your ſelves friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs, that when ye ſhall fail, they may receive you into everlaſting habitations. 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good Foundation,* as the word θεμέλιον is ſometimes uſed, *a good Treaſure againſt the time which is to come, that they may lay hold of eternal Life.*

But the moſt conſiderable Text of all other to this purpoſe, is in *Matth.* 25. where our Saviour gives us a deſcription of the Judgment of the great Day: And if that be a true and proper repreſentation of the proceſs of that Day, then the grand enquiry will be, what Works of Charity have been done or neglected by us, and accordingly Sentence ſhall be paſt upon us.

The proper Reſult from all this Diſcourſe is to perſwade Men to this neceſſary Duty. Our eternal Happineſs does not ſo much depend upon the exerciſe of any one ſingle Grace or Virtue, as this of Charity and Mercy. Faith and Repentance are more general and fundamental Graces,

Graces, and as it were the Parents of all the reſt: But of all ſingle Virtues the Scripture lays the greateſt weight upon this of Charity; and if we do truly believe the Precepts of the Goſpel, and the Promiſes and Threatnings of it, we cannot but have a principal regard to it.

I know how averſe Men generally are to this Duty, which makes them ſo full of Excuſes and Objections againſt it.

1. They have Children to provide for. This is not the caſe of all, and they whoſe caſe it is, may do well to conſider, that it will not be amiſs to leave a Bleſſing, as well as an Inheritance to their Children.

2. They tell us, they intend to do ſomething when they die. I doubt that very much; but granting their Intention to be real, why ſhould Men chuſe to ſpoil a good Work, and to take away the Grace and Acceptableneſs of it, by the manner of doing? It ſhews a great backwardneſs to the Work, when we defer it as long as we can. He that will not do good, till he be enforced by the laſt neceſſity, *diu noluit*, was long unwilling. It is one of the worſt Compliments we can put upon God, to give a thing to him when we can keep it no longer.

3. Others ſay they may come to want themſelves, and it is Prudence to provide againſt that. To this I anſwer,

(1.) I believe that no Man ever came the ſooner to want for his Charity. *David* hath an expreſs Obſervation to the contrary, *Pſa.* 37. 25. *I have been young and now am old, yet have I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his Seed begging bread.* And tho' he uſe a general word, yet that by the *righteous* here he intended the *merciful Man*, is evident from the next words, *he is ever merciful and lendeth.*

And beſides *David*'s Obſervation, we have expreſs Promiſes of God to ſecure us againſt this Fear. *Pſa.* 41. 1, 2. *Bleſſed is he that conſidereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble, the Lord will preſerve him and keep him alive, and he ſhall be bleſſed upon the Earth.* Pro. 28. 27. *He that giveth unto the Poor ſhall not lack.*

(2.) Thou mayeſt come to want, tho' thou give nothing; thou may'ſt loſe that which thou haſt ſpared in this kind as well as the reſt; thou may'ſt loſe all, and then thou art no better ſecured againſt want, than if thou hadſt been charitable. Beſides that, when thou art brought to Poverty, thou wilt want

want the Comfort of having done this Duty, and may'ſt juſtly look upon the neglect of this Duty as one of the Cauſes of thy Poverty. Vol. V.

(3.) After all our Care to provide for our ſelves, we muſt truſt the Providence of God; and a Man can in no caſe ſo ſafely *commit himſelf to God*, as *in well-doing*. If the Providence of God (as we all believe) be peculiarly concern'd to bleſs one Man more than another, I dare ſay the charitable Man will not have the leaſt Portion.

4. There is a worſe Objection than all theſe made by ſome grave Men, who would be glad under a pretence of Piety to ſlip themſelves out of this Duty; and that is this, that it ſavours of Popery to preſs good Works with ſo much earneſtneſs upon Men, as if we could merit Heaven by them; So that they dare not be charitable out of a pious Fear, as they pretend, leſt hereby they ſhould entertain the Doctrine of Merit.

But if the Truth were known, I doubt Covetouſneſs lyes at the bottom of this Objection: However it is fit it ſhould be anſwered. And,

(1.) I ſay that no Man that is not prejudiced either by his Education or Inte-

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reſt, can think that a Creature can merit any thing at the hand of God, to whom all that we can poſſibly do, is antecedently due; much leſs that we can merit ſo great a Reward as that of Eternal Happineſs.

(2.) Tho' we deny the Merit of good Works, yet we firmly believe the neceſſity of them to Eternal Life. And that they are neceſſary to Eternal Life, is as good an Argument to perſwade a wiſe Man to do them, as if they were meritorious; unleſs a Man be ſo vain-glorious as to think Heaven not worth the having, unleſs he purchaſe it himſelf at a valuable Conſideration.

And now let me earneſtly intreat you, as you love God and your own Souls, not to neglect this Duty; leſt you bring your ſelves to the ſame miſerable ſtate with this Rich Man, to whom the leaſt Charity that could be askt was denied. Our Saviour hath purpoſely left this Parable on record, to be a teſtimony and a witneſs to us; leſt we being guilty of the ſame ſin, *ſhould come into the ſame place of torment.*

And if any ask me, according to what proportion of his Eſtate he ought to be charitable? I cannot determine that. Only,

Only, let no Man neglect his Duty, becauſe I cannot (and it may be no one elſe can) tell him the exact proportion of his Charity to his Eſtate. There are ſome Duties that are ſtrictly determined, as thoſe of Juſtice; but God hath left our Charity to be *a free-will Offering*. In the proportion of this Duty, every one muſt determine himſelf by Prudence and the Love of God: God hath left this Duty undetermined, to try the largeneſs of our Hearts towards him; only to encourage us to be *abundant in this Grace*, he hath promiſed, that according to the proportion of our Charity, ſhall be the degree of our Happineſs, 2 *Cor.* 9. 6. *He that ſoweth plentifully, ſhall reap plentifully.* But let us be ſure to do ſomething in this kind; any part of our Eſtate rather than none.

I will conclude with that excellent Counſel of the Son of *Syrach*, Eccl. 4. *My Son defraud not the Poor, and make not the needy Eye to wait long; make not a hungry Soul ſorrowful, neither provoke a Man in his diſtreſs; add not more trouble to a Heart that is vexed, defer not to give to him that is in need. Reject not the ſupplication of the afflicted, nor turn away thy face from a poor Man; turn not away thy Eye from*

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from the needy, and give him none occaſion to curſe thee. For if he curſe thee in the bitterneſs of his Soul, his Prayer ſhall be heard of him that made him. Let it not grieve thee to bow down thine Ear to the poor, and give him a friendly anſwer with meekneſs. Be as a father to the fatherleſs, and inſtead of a husband to their mother; ſo ſhalt thou be as the Son of the moſt high, and he ſhall love thee more than thy Mother doth.

SERMON

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SERMON XI.

The Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*.

Sermon II.

LUKE XVI. 19, 20.

There was a certain Rich Man, which was cloathed in Purple and fine Linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day: And there was a certain Beggar, named Lazarus, *which was laid at his Gate full of Sores.*

I Proceed to our *Second* Obſervation, that a Man may be poor and miſerable in this World, and yet dear to God. This beggar *Lazarus*, tho' he was ſo much ſlighted, and deſpiſed in his life-time by this great rich Man, yet it appeared when he came to die, that he was not neglected by God, for *he gave his Angels charge concerning him*, to convey him to Happineſs; *v.* 22. *The Beggar*

Beggar died, and was carried into Abraham's boſom.

But this Truth is not only repreſented to us in a Parable, but exemplified in the Life of our bleſſed Saviour. Never was any Man ſo dear to God as he was, for he was *his only begotten Son, his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleaſed*: And yet how poor and mean was his Condition in this World! Inſomuch that the *Jews* were offended at him, and could not own one that appeared in ſo much Meanneſs, for the true Meſſias. He was born of mean Parents, and perſecuted as ſoon as he was born; he was deſtitute of worldly Accommodations; *The Foxes had holes, and the Birds of the Air had neſts; but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. He was deſpiſed and rejected of Men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief.*

God could have ſent his Son into the World with Majeſty and great Glory, and have made all the Kings of the Earth to have bowed before him, and paid Homage to him: but the Wiſdom of God choſe rather that he ſhould appear in a poor and humble, in a ſuffering and afflicted Condition, to confound the Pride of the World, who meaſure

the

the Love of God by these outward things, and think that God hates all those whom he permits to be afflicted. Vol. V.

Now it was not possible to give a greater and clearer Demonstration of this Truth, that Goodness and Suffering may meet together in the same Person, than in the Son of God, *who did no Sin, neither was Guile found in his Mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to Grief.*

Afflictions in this World are so far from being a sign of God's Hatred, that they are an Argument of his Love and Care; *whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every Son whom he receiveth.* Those he designs for great things hereafter, he trains up by great Hardships in this World, and by many Tribulations prepares them for a Kingdom. This course God took more especially in the first planting of Christianity; the *poor* chiefly were those that *received the Gospel. Not many mighty, nor many noble; but the base things of the World, and the things that were despised did God chuse. Hearken, my beloved Brethren,* saith St. *James*, ch. 2. 5. *Hath not God chosen the poor in this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of the Kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?*

Now

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Now this Conſideration ſhould perſwade to Patience under the greateſt Sufferings and Afflictions in this world. God may be our Father, and chaſten us ſeverely; nay this very thing is rather an Argument that he is ſo. God may love us tho' the World hate us. 'Tis but exerciſing a little Patience, and theſe Storms will blow over, and we ſhall be removed into a calmer Region, where *all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes; and death and ſorrow ſhall be no more.* This was the Portion of the Son of God here; but *it is a faithful ſaying, that if we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him, if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him.* Therefore thoſe who ſuffer in this world ought not to be moved, *as tho' ſome ſtrange thing hapned unto them; but ſhould rather rejoice, in as much as they are partakers of Chriſts ſufferings, that when his glory ſhall be revealed, they alſo may be glad with exceeding joy,* 1 Pet 4. 12 13. I proceed to a

Third Obſervation, which is the different Eſtate of good and bad men after this life; *Lazarus dyed, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's boſom: the rich man dyed, and went to hell.* This the Juſtice of the Divine Providence ſeems to

to require; ſo that if there had been no Revelation of God to this purpoſe, it is a thing very credible to Natural Reaſon, whether we conſider God or our ſelves. If we conſider God; our Reaſon tells us, that he is the holy and righteous Governor of the World, and conſequently, that he loves Goodneſs and hates Sin, and therefore is concern'd to countenance the one, and diſcountenance the other, in ſuch a ſolemn and publick manner, as may vindicate his Holineſs and Juſtice to the whole World. Now the Diſpenſations of his Providence are promiſcuous in this world; and therefore it ſeems very reaſonable, that there ſhould be a general Aſſizes, a fair and open Tryal; when *God will render to every Man according to his works.*

And if we conſider our ſelves, this will appear very credible; for this hath been the conſtant Opinion, not only of the common People, but of the wiſeſt Perſons, who had only the light of Nature to guide them. Nay if we do but ſearch our own Conſciences, we ſhall find an inward and ſecret acknowledgment of this, in that inward peace and ſatisfaction we find in any good Action, and in that ſhame and fear and horrour that

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that haunts a Man after the commiſſion of any, tho' never ſo ſecret a Sin.

And as Reaſon and Scripture together do aſſure us of a future Judgment; ſo likewiſe, that Men, when they paſs out of this World, ſhall meet with the proper Conſequences and Rewards of their Actions in the other. And tho' the Happineſs or Miſery of Men be not ſo compleat as it ſhall be after the publick Judgment; yet it is unſpeakably great. *Lazarus* is repreſented as very happy immediately after his paſſing out of this World, he is ſaid to be *carried into Abraham's boſom*; by which the *Jews* expreſs the Happineſs of the future State. And the Rich Man is repreſented, as in great Anguiſh and *Torment*. But what the Happineſs of good Men, and the Miſery of wicked Men ſhall be in the other State, we can but now imperfectly and unskilfully deſcribe. Each of theſe I have in another Diſcourſe ſpoken ſomething to. I proceed to a

Serm. on Rom. 6. 21, 22.

Fourth Obſervation, the vaſt difference between Men's Conditions in this World, and the other. The Rich Man proſpered here, and was afterward tormented: *Lazarus* was poor and miſerable in this World, and happy in the other,

other; *v.* 25. *Remember that thou in thy life time receivedſt thy good things, and* Lazarus *evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* And it is very agreeable to the Wiſdom of God, to make ſuch a difference between Mens Conditions in this World and the other; and that for theſe *two* Reaſons. Vol. V.

1*ſt*, For the trying of Men's Virtue.

2*dly*, In order to the Recompencing of it.

1. For the Tryal of Men's Virtue. For this End principally God ordains the Sufferings of good Men, and permits the beſt of his Servants many times to be involved in the greateſt Calamities, to try their Faith in him, and Love to him; to improve their Virtue, and to prevent thoſe Sins into which the mighty Temptations of a perpetual Proſperity are apt to draw even the beſt of Men; to take off their Affections from the love of this vain World, and to engage and fix them there, where they ſhall never repent that they have placed them; to prove their Sincerity towards God, and to exerciſe their Patience and Submiſſion to his Will; to prepare them for the Glory of the next Life, and to make the

Vol. V. Happineſs of Heaven more welcome to them, when they ſhall come to it.

2dly, In order to the Recompencing of Men; that they who will take up with the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of this preſent World, and take no care for their future State, that they who will gratifie their Senſes, and neglect their immortal Souls, may inherit the proper Conſequences of their wretched Choice. And on the other hand, that they who love God above all things, and had rather endure the greateſt Evils, than do the leaſt, that they who look beyond the preſent Scene of things, and believe the reality and Eternity of the other State, and live accordingly, may not be diſappointed in their Hopes, and ſerve God, and ſuffer for him for nothing. From this conſideration of the Difference between the Condition of Men in this World and the other, we may infer,

1. That no Man ſhould meaſure his Felicity or Unhappineſs by his Lot in this World. If thou receiveſt thy good things, art rich and honourable, and haſt as much of the things of this World as thine Heart can wiſh, art ſplendidly attired, and *fareſt ſumptuouſly every day*; art *in no trouble like other Men, neither art*

art plagued like other folk; do not upon this bleſs thy ſelf as the happy Man. On the other Hand, art thou poor and miſerable, deſtitute of all the Conveniences and Accommodations of this Life? Do not repine at thy Lot, and murmur at God for having dealt hardly with thee. No Man can be pronounced happy or miſerable for what befals him in this Life; *no Man knows Love or Hatred by theſe things*; this Life is but a ſhort and inconſiderable duration, and it matters not much what Entertainment we meet withal, as we are paſſing through this World: The ſtate of Eternity is that, wherein the Happineſs or Miſery of Men ſhall be determined. He is the happy Man who is ſo in that Life which ſhall never have an end; and he is miſerable that ſhall be ſo for ever.

2. We ſhould not ſet too great a value upon the bleſſings of this Life. We may *receive our good things* here, and *be tormented* hereafter; nay this very thing will be no inconſiderable part of our Torment, none of the leaſt Aggravations of our Miſery, that we *did receive our good Things*. Nothing afflicts a Man more, and toucheth him more ſenſibly when he is in Miſery, than the

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remembrance of his former Proſperity; had he never been happy, his Miſery would be the leſs.

Therefore we ſhould be ſo far from applauding our ſelves in the Proſperity of this World, that we ſhould rather be afraid of *receiving our good things* here; leſt God ſhould put us off with theſe things, and this ſhould be all our Portion, and leſt our Miſery in the next World ſhould be the greater for our having been happy.

The Felicities of this World are tranſient, and tho' our Happineſs were never ſo compleat, yet it is going off, and paſſing away; and when it is gone and paſt, if Miſery ſucceed it, it had better never have been. *Remember, thou in thy life time receivedſt thy good things*; theſe things are only for our *life time*, and how ſhort is that! Did Men ſeriouſly conſider this, they would not ſet ſuch a price upon any of the tranſient Enjoyments of this Life, as for the ſake of them to neglect the great Concernments of another World. We are apt to be dazled with the preſent glittering of worldly Glory and Proſperity: But if we would look upon theſe things as they will be ſhortly gone from us, how little

little would they ſignifie! The Rich Man here in the Parable did, no doubt, think himſelf a much happier Man than poor *Lazarus* that lay at his Door; and yet after a little while, how glad would he have been to have changed Conditions with this poor Man! When he was *in Torments*, then no doubt he wiſht that he had ſuffer'd all the Miſery and Want in this World which *Lazarus* did, provided he might have been *comforted* as he was, and *carried by Angels into Abraham's boſom*. We ſhould value this World, and look upon it, as this Rich Man did, not when he enjoyed it, but when he was taken from it; and we ſhould eſteem it and uſe it while we may, as he wiſht he had done when it was too late.

3. We ſhould not be exceſſively troubled, if we meet with Hardſhip and Affliction here in this World; becauſe thoſe whom God deſigns for the greateſt Happineſs hereafter, may receive *evil things* here. Thus our bleſſed Saviour, *the Captain of our Salvation, was made perfect through Sufferings*; this was the method which God uſed towards his own Son, firſt *he ſuffer'd, and* then *entred into Glory*. He ſuffered more than any of us

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can bear; and yet he ſupported himſelf under all his Sufferings by the conſideration of the Glory that would follow; *for the Joy that was ſet before him, he endured the Croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame.*

The ſame Conſideration ſhould arm us with Patience and Conſtancy under the greateſt Evils of this life. The Evils that we lie under are paſſing and going off; but the Happineſs is to come. And if the Happineſs of the next World were no greater, nor of longer continuance, than the Miſeries of this World; or if they did equally anſwer one another; yet a wiſe Man would chuſe to have Miſery firſt, and his Happineſs laſt. For if his Happineſs were firſt, all the Pleaſure and Comfort of it would be eaten out, by diſmal Apprehenſions of what was to follow: but his Sufferings, if they were firſt, would be ſweetned by the conſideration of his future Happineſs; and the bitterneſs of his Sufferings would give a quicker Reliſh to his Happineſs when it ſhould come, and make it greater.

But a good Man under the Sufferings of this life, hath not only this Comfort, that his Happineſs is to come, but likewiſe that it ſhall be infinitely greater than

than his Sufferings; that these are but short, but that shall never have an end. And this was that which fortified the first Christians against all that the Malice and Cruelty of the World could do against them. They thought themselves well paid, if *through many Tribulations they might* at last *enter into the Kingdom of God*; because they believed that the Joys of the next life would abundantly recompence all their Labours and Sufferings in this World. They expected a mighty Reward far beyond all their Sufferings; they were firmly perswaded that they should be vast Gainers at the last. So the Apostle tells us of himself, *Rom.* 8. 18. *I reckon that the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed.* And to the same purpose, 2 *Cor.* 4. 17, 18. *Our light Afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us an eternal weight of Glory, whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* If we would consider all things together, and fix our Eyes as much upon the Happiness and Glory of the next World, as upon the Pomp and Splendor

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of this, if we would look as much at *the things which are not ſeen*, as *the things which are ſeen*, we ſhould eaſily perceive, that he who ſuffers in this World does not renounce his Happineſs, only puts it out to Intereſt, upon terms of the greateſt Advantage.

4. We ſhould do all things with a Regard to our future and eternal State. It matters not much what our Condition is in this World, becauſe that's to continue but for a little while: but we ought to have a great and ſerious Regard to that State that never ſhall have an end. Therefore whenever we are doing any thing, we ſhould conſider what Influence ſuch an Action will have upon the Happineſs or Miſery of the next Life. We ſhould meaſure every Action, and every Condition of our Lives by the reference of them to Eternity. To be rich and great in this world will contribute nothing to our future Happineſs; all theſe things which we ſo much dote upon, and purſue with ſo much eagerneſs, will not commend any Man to God; they will ſignifie nothing when we come to appear before our Judge. Death will ſtrip us of theſe things, and in the other World, the Soul

Soul of the pooreſt Man that ever lived ſhall be upon equal Terms with the richeſt. Nothing but Holineſs and Virtue will then avail us; and it is but a little while and we ſhall all certainly be of this Mind, that the beſt thing Men can do in this World, is to provide for the other. I proceed to a

Fifth Obſervation, that the State of Men in the next World is fixt and unchangable; which I ground upon *v.* 26. *Between us and you there is a great Gulf fixt, ſo that they that would paſs from hence to you cannot, neither can they paſs to us, that would come from thence.* By which Words our Saviour ſeems not only to intend, that they that are in Heaven and Hell can have no Communication and Intercourſe with one another; but likewiſe that they are lodg'd in an immutable State. Thoſe that are happy are like to continue ſo; and thoſe that are miſerable are immutably fixt in that State.

1. As to thoſe that are in Happineſs there can be no great doubt. For what can tempt Men that have ſo narrowly ſcap'd the Dangers and Temptations of a wicked World, and are poſſeſt of ſo great a Happineſs by the free Grace and Mercy of God, to do any thing whereby

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by they may forfeit their Happineſs; or ſo much as to entertain a Thought of offending that God, to whom they cannot but be ſenſible how infinitely they are obliged. In this imperfect ſtate few Men have ſo little Goodneſs as to ſin without a Temptation; but in that ſtate where Men are perfectly good, and can have no Temptation to be otherwiſe, it is not imaginable that they ſhould fall from that ſtate.

2. As to the ſtate of the damned, that *that* likewiſe is immutable, the Scripture does ſeem plainly enough to aſſert, when it calls it *an everlaſting Deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord*, and uſes ſuch Expreſſions to ſet forth the continuance of their Miſery, as ſignifie the longeſt and moſt interminable Duration, expreſſions of as great an Extent as thoſe which are uſed to ſignifie the Eternal Happineſs of the bleſſed; and as large and unlimited, as any are to be had in thoſe Languages wherein the Scriptures are written.

Beſides that wicked Men in the other World are in Scripture repreſented, as in the ſame Condition with the Devils, of whom there is no ground to believe that any of them ever did or will repent.

repent. Not becauſe Repentance is impoſſible in it's own nature to thoſe that are in extream Miſery; but becauſe there is no place left for it. Being under an irreverſible Doom, there is no encouragement to Repentance, no hope of Mercy and Pardon, without which Repentance is impoſſible. For if a Man did utterly deſpair of Pardon, and were aſſured upon good ground, that God would never ſhew Mercy to him, in this caſe a Man would grow deſperate, and not care what he did. He that knows that whatever he does, he is miſerable and undone, will not matter how he demeans himſelf. All motives to Repentance are gone after a Man once knows it will be to no purpoſe. And this the Scripture ſeems to repreſent to us, as the caſe of the Devils and damned Spirits. Becauſe their ſtate is finally determined, and they are concluded under an irreverſible Sentence, therefore Repentance is impoſſible to them.

Sorry, no doubt, they are, and heartily troubled that by their own Sin and Folly they have brought this Miſery upon themſelves; and they cannot but conceive an everlaſting Diſpleaſure againſt themſelves, for having been the Cauſe

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Cauſe and Authors of their own Ruin; and the Reflection upon this will be a perpetual ſpring of Diſcontent, and fill their Minds with eternal Rage and Vexation; and ſo long as they feel the intolerable Puniſhments of Sin, and groan under the inſupportable Torments of it, and ſee no end of this miſerable State, no hope of getting out of it, they can be no otherwiſe affected, than with Diſcontent at themſelves, and Rage and Fury againſt God.

They are indeed penitent ſo far, as to be troubled at themſelves for what they have done; but this Trouble works no Change and Alteration in them; they ſtill hate God who inflicts theſe Puniſhments upon them, and who they believe is determined to continue them in this miſerable ſtate. The preſent Anguiſh of their Condition, and their deſpair of bettering it, makes them mad; and their Minds are ſo diſtracted by the wildneſs of their Paſſions, and their Spirits ſo exaſperated and ſet on Fire by their own giddy Motions, that there can be no reſt and ſilence in their Souls, not ſo much as the liberty of one calm and ſedate Thought.

Or if at any time they reflect upon the evil

evil of their Sins, and ſhould entertain any thought of returning to God and their Duty, they are preſently checkt with this Conſideration, that their caſe is determined, that God is implacably offended with them, and is inexorably and peremptorily reſolved to make them miſerable for ever; and during this Perſwaſion, no Man can return to the love of God and Goodneſs, without which there can be no Repentance. Vol. V.

This Conſideration, of the immutable ſtate of Men after this Life, ſhould engage us with all ſeriouſneſs and diligence to endeavour to ſecure our future Happineſs. God hath *ſet before us good and evil, Life and Death*, and we may yet *chuſe* which we pleaſe; but in the other World, we muſt ſtand to that Choice which we have made here, and inherit the Conſequences of it.

By Sin Mankind is brought into a miſerable State; but our Condition is not deſperate and paſt Remedy. God hath ſent his Son *to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins.* So that tho' our Caſe be bad, it need not continue ſo, if it be not our own fault. There is a poſſibility now of changing our Condition for the better, and

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and of laying the foundation of a perpetual Happineſs for our ſelves. The Grace of God calls upon us, and is ready to aſſiſt us; ſo that no Man's Caſe is ſo bad, but there is a poſſibility of bettering it, if we be not wanting to our ſelves, and will make uſe of the Grace which God offers, who is never wanting to the ſincere endeavours of Men. Under the Influence and Aſſiſtance of this Grace, thoſe who are *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*, may *paſs from death to life*, may be *turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* So long as we are in this World there is a poſſibility of being tranſlated from one ſtate to another, from the *dominion of Satan, into the kingdom of God's dear Son.* But if we neglect the oportunities of this life, and ſtand out againſt the offers of God's Grace and Mercy, there will no Overtures be made to us in the other World. After this life is ended, God will try us no more; our final miſcarriage in this World will prove fatal to us in the other, and we ſhall not be permitted to live over again to correct our Errors. *As the Tree falls, ſo it ſhall lie*; ſuch a State as we are ſettled in, when we go out of this World, ſhall be fixt in the other, and there will be

no

no poſſibility of changing it. We are yet *in the hand of our own Counſel*, and by God's Grace we may mould and faſhion our own Fortune. But if we trifle away this Advantage, we ſhall *fall into the hands of the living God*, out of which there is no Redemption. God hath yet left Heaven and Hell to our choice, and we had need to look about us, and chuſe well, who can chuſe but once for all and for ever. There is yet a ſpace and oportunity left us of Repentance; but ſo ſoon as we ſtep out of this Life, and are entred upon the other World, our Condition will be ſealed, never to be reverſt. And becauſe after this Life there will be no further hopes of Mercy, there will be no poſſibility of Repentance. *This is the accepted time, this is the day of Salvation; therefore to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts; leſt God ſwear in his Wrath that we ſhall not enter into his reſt.* I proceed to a

Sixth Obſervation, that a ſtanding Revelation of God is Evidence ſufficient for Divine things. *They have Moſes, and the Prophets, let them hear them*; that is, they have the Books of *Moſes* and the Prophets, written by Men divinely inſpired, theſe do ſufficiently declare to them

them the Will of God and their Duty; and it is unreaſonable to demand or expect that God ſhould do more for their Conviction and Satisfaction.

I know very well the Text ſpeaks only of the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, thoſe of the New being not then extant, when this Parable was deliver'd. But what is here ſaid concerning the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, is equally applicable to the New; and tho' *Abraham* do only recommend *Moſes* and *the Prophets*, there is no doubt but he would have ſaid the ſame concerning *Chriſt* and *his Apoſtles*, if the Books of the New Teſtament had been then extant. So that what I ſhall ſay upon this Obſervation, does indifferently concern the whole Scripture.

And that I may make out this Obſervation more fully, I ſhall take theſe *Five* things into conſideration.

1*ſt*, What we are to underſtand by a Divine Revelation.

2*dly*, Give a brief Account of the ſeveral kinds of it.

3*dly*, Shew what Advantage this ſtanding Revelation of the Scriptures hath above any other way of conveying the Will of God to the World.

4*thly*,

4*thly*, That there is ſufficient Evidence for the Divinity of the Scriptures.

5*thly*, That it is unreaſonable to expect that God ſhould do more for our Conviction, than to afford ſuch a ſtanding Revelation of his Mind and Will. I ſhall go over theſe as briefly as I can. I begin with the

1*ſt*, What we are to underſtand by a Divine Revelation. By a Divine Revelation we are to underſtand *a ſupernatural Diſcovery or Manifeſtation of any thing to us*; I ſay *ſupernatural*, becauſe it may either be immediately by God; or by the mediation of Angels, as moſt, if not all the Revelations of the Old Teſtament were. *A ſupernatural Diſcovery or Manifeſtation*, either immediately to our Minds, by our Underſtandings and inward Faculties; (for I do not ſo well underſtand the diſtinction between Underſtanding and Imagination, as to be careful to take notice of it,) or elſe mediately to our Underſtandings by the mediation of our outward Senſes, as by an external Appearance to our bodily Eyes, or by a Voice and Sound to the Senſe of Hearing. *A Diſcovery or Manifeſtation of a thing*, whether it be ſuch as cannot be known at all by the

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uſe of our natural Reaſon and Underſtanding; or ſuch as may be diſcovered by natural Light, but is more clearly revealed or made known, or we are awakened to a more particular and attentive conſideration of it. For it is not at all unſuitable to the Wiſdom of God, to make *a ſupernatural Diſcovery* to us of ſuch things as may be known by the light of Nature, either to give us a clearer manifeſtation of ſuch Truths as were more obſcurely known, and did as it were lie buried in our Undeſtandings; or elſe to quicken our Minds to a more ſerious and lively conſideration of thoſe Truths.

2*dly*. For the ſeveral kinds of Divine Revelation. That they were various, the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* tells us, *ch*. 1. 1. *God who at ſundry times, and in ſeveral manners, ſpake to the Fathers by the Prophets*; where by *Prophets* we are to underſtand not only thoſe who did foretel future things; but any Perſon that was divinely inſpired, and to whom God was pleaſed to make any ſupernatural Diſcovery of himſelf.

Now the ſeveral Kinds of Revelation taken notice of by the *Jews*, are Viſions; Dreams; Propheſie; Oracle; Inſpiration,

ſpiration, or that which they call the Holy Ghoſt; voice *Bath-col*; or that which was the higheſt of all, which they call *gradus Moſaicus*, the degree of Revelation which was peculiar to *Moſes*. The *Jewiſh* Writers, eſpecially *Maimonides*, have many ſubtil Obſervations about the differences of theſe ſeveral kinds of Revelation, which depend upon ſubtil and Philoſophical Diſtinctions of the Faculties of Perception; as that ſome of theſe Revelations were by impreſſion only upon the Underſtanding; ſome only upon the Imagination; ſome upon both; ſome upon the outward Senſes: But the ſimple and plain difference between them, ſo far as there is any ground in Scripture to diſtinguiſh them, ſeems to be this; Viſion was a Repreſentation of ſomething to a Man, when he was waking, in oppoſition to Dreams, which were Repreſentations made to Men in their Sleep. Propheſie might be either Dream or Viſion, and the *Jews* obſerve that it was always one of theſe two ways, which they grounded upon *Numb.* 12. 6. *If there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make my ſelf known to him in a Viſion, and will ſpeak unto him in a Dream.* But Propheſie in the ſtrict Notion of it, had this peculiarly belonging to it, that it

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was not only monitory or inſtructive, but did foretel ſome Event of Concernment to others; and the *Jewiſh* Doctors tell us, that it was a clearer Revelation, and carried greater aſſurance along with it; and that this was common to all the three, that there was ſomething of Extaſie and Tranſport of Mind in all theſe.

The fourth ſort of Revelation, which was by Oracle, which is call'd *Urim* and *Thummim*, was a rendring of Anſwers to Queſtions, by the High-Prieſt looking upon the Stones in the Breaſt-plate, which how it was done, is uncertain.

The fifth ſort of Revelation is that which they call the Holy Ghoſt, which was a more calm and gentle Inſpiration, without any extraordinary Tranſport of Mind or Extaſie; ſuch as *David* had in the writing of the *Pſalms*.

The loweſt of all was that which they call'd *Bath-col*, which was by a Voice from Heaven; and this is the Way of Revelation, which the *Jews* obſerved did only continue among them from the Days of the Prophet *Malachi* to our Saviour.

The higheſt of all was that which they call'd *gradus Moſaicus*, to which the *Jews* give ſeveral Prerogatives above all the other ways of Revelation; as that it was done by Impreſſion merely upon the

the Underſtanding, without Extaſie, or Rapture, or Tranſport, when he was waking, and in his ordinary Temper, and his Senſes not bound up either by Extaſie or Sleep, that it was a Revelation immediately from God himſelf, and not by the Mediation of Angels; without any Fear, or Amazement, or Fainting, which was incident to other Prophets; and the Spirit of Propheſie reſted upon him, and he could exert it arbitrarily, and put it forth when he would. Of which, thus much is evidently true from the Story of him, that the Spirit of Propheſie did reſt more conſtantly upon him, and that he could exert it with greater freedom, and without any diſcernable Amazement or Tranſport from his ordinary Temper: But that it was by Impreſſion merely upon his Underſtanding, as *that* is a diſtinct Faculty from the Imagination, is not ſo certain; that it was always by an immediate Communication from God, without the Mediation of Angels, ſeems not to be true; for St. *Stephen* tells us, that *the Law was given by the diſpoſition of Angels*, Acts 7. 53. And St. *Paul*, that *it was ordained by the Angels in the hand of a Mediator*, that is *Moſes*, *Gal.* 3. 19.

Vol. V. But that the Revelation which was made to him, had ſome ſingular Prerogatives above thoſe of other Prophets, is plain from Scripture, *Numb.* 12. 5, 6, 7, 8. when *Aaron* and *Miriam* contended with *Moſes* as being equal to him, God tells them that there was a vaſt difference between him and other Prophets; *Hear now my Words, if there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make my ſelf known unto him in a Viſion, and will ſpeak unto him in a Dream. My Servant* Moſes *is not ſo,—With him will I ſpeak Mouth to Mouth, even apparently, and not in dark Speeches,* &c. Exod. 33. 11. *And the Lord ſpake unto Moſes face to face, as a Man ſpeaketh unto his Friend.* Deut. 34. 10. *And there aroſe not a Prophet ſince in Iſrael like unto Moſes, whom the Lord knew face to face.* All which ſignifies at leaſt this, that God made the cleareſt, and moſt familiar, and moſt perfect Diſcoveries to *Moſes* of any of the Prophets; only our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom God hath diſcovered his Will to us under the New Teſtament, did excel *Moſes*; *Moſes* being but *a faithful Servant* that is, *humilis amicus*, a meaner ſort of Friend; but *the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the only begotten Son of God*, who came from *the boſom of his Father*, and was intimately acquainted with the ſecrets of his

his Will, and *had not the Spirit given him by measure*, but the most plentiful Effusion of it, being *anointed above his Fellows.* Vol. V.

Now these being the several sorts and degrees of Revelation, which God hath made of himself to the World, the Holy Scriptures are a System or Collection of these, the authentick Instrument or Record, by which the things revealed any of these ways, are transmitted to us, and is therefore call'd *the Word of God*, as containing those things which God in several Ages hath spoken to the World; that is matters of Divine Revelation, which are necessary to be known by Men, in order to their Eternal Happiness. And this being now the great and standing Revelation of God, which is to continue to the end of the World, I intend to limit my Discourse solely to this, as being the only Revelation which we are concern'd to enquire after.

And therefore in the 3*d* Place to shew you what Advantages this standing Revelation of the Scriptures hath, above private Revelations made to particular Persons, and frequently repeated and renewed in several Ages; that so it may appear both agreable to the Wisdom of God to settle Revelations in this way, as being more commodious; and

likewiſe to his Goodneſs, it being a real Priviledge which theſe later Ages of the World enjoy, that they have a more fixt and certain way of being acquainted with the Will of God, than thoſe Ages had, which were govern'd by ſuch private Revelations, as were now and then made to particular Perſons. And the Advantages are theſe.

1. It is a more certain way of conveyance of things, and more ſecure and free from Impoſture. Suppoſe a Revelation made to a particular Perſon, which is of general Concernment, that this may have a general and laſting effect, he muſt impart it to others, as many as he can, and give them the beſt Aſſurance he can of it; and theſe muſt relate it to others; and ſo it muſt paſs from hand to hand, to be delivered from Parents to their Children. Now this way of conveying a Revelation by Oral Report muſt needs be liable to many Uncertainties, both by involuntary Miſtakes, through Weakneſs of Memory or Underſtanding; and wilful Falſifications and Impoſtures, out of Malice and Deſign. So that the effect of an unrecorded Revelation can neither be large nor laſting, it can but reach a few Perſons, and continue

a little while in its full Credibility; and the further it goes, the weaker, like Circles made in Water, which the more they inlarge themſelves, and the longer they continue, the leſs diſcernible they are, 'till at length they quite diſappear. Whereas being once recorded by Perſons ſecured from Error, by Supernatural and Divine Aſſiſtance, they are not liable to thoſe eaſie Falſifications or Mistakes, which traditional Reports and Relations are neceſſarily, through human Malice or Weakneſs, liable to. Vol. V.

2. It is a more general and univerſal way of Conveyance; Which is evident from the common Experience of the World, who have pitched upon this way of writing things in Books, as that which doth moſt eaſily convey the knowledge and notice of things to the generality of Men.

3. It is a more uniform way of Conveyance; that is, things that are once written and propagated that way, lye equally open to all, and come in a manner with equal Credit to all; it being not morally poſſible that a common Book, that paſſeth through all hands, and which is of vaſt Importance and Concernment, ſhould be liable to any material Corruption,

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tion, without a general Conſpiracy and Agreement, which cannot be, but that it muſt be generally known. So that conſidering the commonneſs, and univerſal Concernment of this Book of the Scriptures, all Men are in a manner equally, that is, every Man is ſufficiently and competently aſſur'd of the credit of it; that is, that we are not in any material thing impoſed upon by falſe Copies. But in traditional Revelation it is quite otherwiſe; Tradition being a very unequal and ununiform way of Conveyance. For ſeeing it may be of general Concernment, and all cannot have it at the firſt hand, that is, immediately from him to whom it was made; but ſome at the ſecond, others at the third, fourth, or fifth hand, or much further off; the Credit of it will be neceſſarily weakned by every Remove. A Report that comes through many Hands, being like the Argument we call *Induction*; and as the Strength and Goodneſs of that depends upon the Truth of every one of thoſe Inſtances that make it up, ſo that if any of them fail, the whole Argument is naught; ſo the credit of a Report that paſſeth through twenty hands, depends upon the Integrity and Sufficiency of all the

the Relators, and whatever there is either of Falſehood and Malice, or of Incapacity of Underſtanding, or Frailty of Memory in any of the Relators, ſo much Weakneſs is derived into the Report or Teſtimony; and conſequently the aſſurance which we can have of a private Revelation, which is deliver'd traditionally through a great many Perſons, muſt needs be very unequal. Vol. V.

4. It is a more laſting way of Conveyance. Which likewiſe appears by Experience, we having now nothing at all of the Hiſtory of ancient times, but what is conveyed down to us in Writing.

5. It is a more human way of Conveyance, which requires leſs of Miracle and ſupernatural Interpoſition for the Preſervation of it. This Book of the Scriptures may with ordinary human Care be tranſmitted intire, and free from any material Error, to all ſucceeding Ages. But Revelations unwritten, if they have any laſting and conſiderable Effect, they muſt at leaſt in every Age be renewed and repeated; otherwiſe in a very ſhort ſpace, either through the unfaithfulneſs, or careleſsneſs and frailty of Men, they will either be quite loſt,

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or ſo corrupted and depraved, that they will ſignifie nothing.

From all which it appears, that we have ſo little cauſe to murmur and repine at the Providence of God, which in theſe later Ages of the World does not make thoſe more immediate Diſcoveries and Manifeſtations of himſelf to us, that he did to former Ages, that we have rather great reaſon to admire the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God's Providence, which hath privileged us with this ſtanding Revelation of his *written Word*, which hath ſo many ways the Advantage of frequent and extraordinary Revelation, and in reſpect of the generality of Mankind, is much more uſeful and effectual to its end. I know there are ſome that have endeavour'd to perſwade the World, that Doctrines may much better be preſerved by common Rumor and Report, than by Writing and Record; but I hope there is no Man ſo deſtitute of common Senſe as to believe them, contrary to the Experience of all Men.

I come now to the 4*th* thing I propos'd to be conſider'd; namely, That there is ſufficient Evidence of the Divinity of the Scriptures. By the Divinity of

of the Scriptures, I mean, that they were revealed by God, and that the things contained in them were not invented by Men, but discovered to Men by God; and that the Pen-men of these Books did not write their own private Conceptions, but were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Now if we can be satisfied of this, we ought to receive the Scriptures with the same Reverence, as if an Angel from Heaven should declare these things unto us, or as if God should immediately reveal them to our Minds; for nothing can come with greater Authority than this, that we believe it to be revealed by God; and provided we be assured of this, it matters not which way; the thing hath the same Authority.

Now that we have sufficient Evidence of the Divinity of the Scriptures, will best appear, by considering what is sufficient to give Authority to a Book, so that no prudent or reasonable Man can question, but that the Book was writ by him whose Name it bears. For what Evidence we would accept of, for the Authority of other Books, we must not refuse in this case for the Scriptures; if we do, we deal unequally, and it is a sign that we do not want Evidence for the Authority of the Scriptures, but that we have no mind to believe them. Now

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Now the utmoſt Authority that any Book is capable of, is, that it hath been tranſmitted down to us by the general and uncontroll'd Teſtimony of all Ages, and that the Authority of it was never queſtioned in that Age wherein it was written, nor invalidated ever ſince.

And this Evidence we have for the Authority of the Scriptures. As for the Old Teſtament, I ſhall not now labor in the proof of that by Arguments proper to it ſelf, but ſhall take the Divinity of them upon the Authority of the New, which, if it be proved, is ſufficient Evidence for it, tho' there were no other.

Now for the Scriptures of the New Teſtament, I deſire but theſe *two* things to be granted to me at firſt.

1. That all were written by thoſe Perſons whoſe Names they bear; and for this we have as much Authority, as for any Books in the World, and ſo much as may ſatisfie Men in other caſes, and therefore not to be rejected in this.

2. That thoſe who wrote thoſe Books were Men of Integrity, and did not wilfully falſifie in any thing; and this cannot reaſonably be denyed, becauſe theſe very Perſons gave the utmoſt Evidence that Men could give of their Integrity. The higheſt Atteſtation that any Man can

can give of the Truth of what he relates, is to lay down his Life for the Teſtimony of it; and this the Apoſtles did. Vol. V.

Now if this be granted, that they did not falſifie in their Relations concerning the Miracles of Chriſt, and his Reſurrection, and the miraculous Gifts which were beſtowed upon the Apoſtles after his Aſcenſion; this is as great an Evidence as the World can give, and as the thing is capable of, that our Saviour was *a Teacher come from God*, and that the Apoſtles were extraordinarily aſſiſted by the Holy Ghoſt; and if this be granted, what can be deſired more to prove the Divinity of their Writings?

But it may be ſaid, that tho' the Apoſtles were granted to be Men of Integrity, and that they did not wilfully falſifie in their Relations, yet they might be miſtaken about thoſe Matters. But that they were not, we have as much Evidence as can be for any thing of this Nature, namely, that the things which are related are plain ſenſible matters of Fact, about which no Man need miſtake unleſs he will; and they did not write things upon the report of others, who might poſſibly have deſigns to deceive, but upon the ſureſt Evidence in the World, their own Knowledge, and

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the Teſtimony of their Senſes; *the things that we have ſeen and heard teſtifie we unto you.* So that if they were miſtaken in theſe things, no Man can be ſure of any thing; and by the ſame Reaſon that we disbelieve the Authority of the Scriptures upon this account, we muſt believe nothing at all. This is in ſhort the whole force of the Argument for the Divinity of the Scriptures, which I might have enlarged infinitely upon; but I deſign now only briefly to repreſent to you, that we, who live at the diſtance of ſo many Ages from the time of this Revelation, are not deſtitute of ſufficient Evidence for the Authority of the Scriptures, and ſuch Evidence, as they who reject in other Caſes, are eſteemed unreaſonable. I ſhould come now to the

5*th*, and laſt Thing, namely, that it is unreaſonable to expect, that God ſhould do more for our Conviction, than to afford us a ſtanding Revelation of his Mind and Will, ſuch as the Books of the holy Scriptures are. But this I ſhall refer to another Oportunity, in a particular Diſcourſe upon the 31. *verſe*, which contains the main Deſign, the Sum, and Subſtance of this whole Parable.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

The Parable of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*.

Sermon III.

Preach'd at *Whitehall*, Anno 1678.

LUKE XVI. 31.

If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded tho' one roſe from the dead.

THESE Words are the Concluſion of that excellent Parable of our Saviour concerning the Rich Man and *Lazarus*, and they are the final Anſwer which *Abraham* gives to the Rich Man's laſt Requeſt; who being in great *Torment*, and not able to obtain any Eaſe for himſelf, is repreſented as concerned for his Relations, whom he had left behind him upon Earth; leſt

Vol. V. they also by their own Careleſsneſs and Folly ſhould plunge themſelves into the ſame Miſery that he was in, and therefore he begs of *Abraham*, that he would *ſend Lazarus to* his *Father's Houſe*, where he had *five Brethren, that he might teſtifie unto them, leſt they alſo ſhould come into that place of Torment.* To which Requeſt *Abraham* anſwers, that there was no neceſſity of ſuch an extraordinary courſe to be uſed toward thoſe who had ſufficient means of Conviction ſo near at hand, if they would but hearken to them, and make uſe of them. *Abraham ſaith unto him, they have Moſes and the Prophets; let them hear them.*

But the Rich Man preſſeth his Requeſt further, upon this Reaſon, that they might not perhaps be moved by *Moſes* and *the Prophets*, nay it was likely they would not be moved by them; for they had always had them, and yet they remained impenitent: But if a ſpecial Meſſenger ſhould be ſent to them from the dead, this certainly could not fail to awaken them, and bring them to Repentance, *v.* 30. *And he ſaid, nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* To which *Abraham* makes this peremptory Reply, *If*

they

they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded, tho' one roſe from the dead. Vol. V.

In which Words *Abraham* abſolutely denies that there is any ſuch Probability, much leſs Certainty, that thoſe who reject a publick credible Revelation of God, ſuch as that of the Holy Scriptures is, ſhould be effectually convinced by a Meſſenger from the dead. And our Saviour brings in *Abraham* delivering himſelf very poſitively in this matter, and therefore we may preſume it to be our Saviour's own Senſe, and may rely upon it for a Truth; which however at firſt ſight it may not be ſo evident, yet I hope in the progreſs of this Diſcourſe to make it ſufficiently clear.

But before I undertake that, I ſhall premiſe a Caution or two to prevent all Miſtake in this matter.

Firſt, That we are not to underſtand theſe Words too ſtrictly and rigorouſly, as if the thing were ſimply and in it ſelf impoſſible, that a Man who is not convinced by hearing or reading *Moſes* and *the Prophets*, ſhould be brought to Repentance any other way. For it is very poſſible in the Nature of the thing, yea and likely enough, that a Man who is

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not convinced by calm Evidence and Perſwaſion, may yet be very much wrought upon by a ſtrange and amazing Accident; and if one, whom he had known when he was alive, ſhould appear to him from the dead, and declare the certainty of a future State, and the condition of things in another World, there is little doubt to be made, but that this would more rouze and awaken him to conſider his Danger, than all the Threatnings of God's Word; and 'tis very poſſible that, by the Concurrence of God's Grace, this might prove an effectual Means to convince ſuch a Man, and to bring him to Repentance. And yet for all this, it is not probable upon the whole matter, and if all Circumſtances be duly conſider'd, that this ſhould generally have a permanent effect upon Men, ſo as throughly to reclaim ſuch Perſons as do obſtinately reſiſt the Light and Counſels of God's Word.

Secondly, Another Caution I would give is this, That we are not to underſtand theſe Words ſo, as to weaken the force of that Argument from Miracles for the Proof and Confirmation of a Divine Doctrine; as if our Saviour intended to inſinuate, that Miracles are not

a proper and ſufficient Argument to convince Men. For our Saviour does not here oppoſe *Moſes* and *the Prophets* to a miraculous Teſtimony; but he advanceth the publick Evidence and Teſtimony which *Moſes* and *the Prophets* had above the Evidence of a ſingle and private Miracle; for *Moſes* and *the Prophets* had their Confirmation from Miracles; and Miracles are the great Evidence and Atteſtation which God hath always given to the Divinity of any Perſon or Doctrine; and therefore *Abraham* cannot be thought to ſpeak any thing to the Prejudice of Miracles, when he ſays, *If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded, tho one roſe from the dead.* Nay ſo far is he from that, that this reaſoning of his is rather for the Advantage of Miracles. For *Moſes* and *the Prophets* had the Confirmation of many and great, of publick and unqueſtionable Miracles; a credible Relation whereof was conveyed down to after Ages. So that if rational Means of Conviction were the thing deſired, it was not likely that thoſe, who were not perſwaded by *Moſes* and *the Prophets*, which were acknowledged by themſelves to have had the Confirmation of ſo many

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undoubted Miracles, ſhould in reaſon be convinced by a private and ſingle Miracle.

Theſe Conſiderations being premiſed by way of Caution, I come now to make out the Truth of what is here aſſerted in the Text. Aud for the full clearing of this matter, I ſhall ſpeak to theſe *two* Propoſitions.

Firſt, That it is unreaſonable to expect that God ſhould do more for the Conviction of Men, than to afford them a ſtanding Revelation of his Mind and Will; ſuch as that of the holy Scriptures is. And if ſo, then

Secondly, That upon the whole matter it is very improbable, that thoſe who reject this publick Revelation of God, ſhould be effectually convinced, tho' one ſhould ſpeak to them from the dead.

Firſt, That it is unreaſonable to expect that God ſhould do more for the Conviction of Men, than to afford them a ſtanding Revelation of his Mind and Will; ſuch as that of the Holy Scriptures is. This is ſtrongly imply'd in *Abraham*'s firſt Anſwer, *They have Moſes and the Prophets, let them hear them*; as if he had ſaid, having ſuch Means of Conviction ſo near at hand, why ſhould they deſire

and

and expect any other? It is in this case of the Scriptures, as in that of God's Providence; God does not commonly prove his Providence to Men by extraordinary instances of his Power, and by changing the Course of Nature, to convince every Man in the World that he governs it: but by standing Testimonies of his Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness; by these God does sufficiently satisfie considerate Men of his Government and Care of the World; and tho' he do seldom manifest himself in supernatural and extraordinary ways, yet he hath not left himself without a Witness, by the constant course of Nature, in the returns of Day and Night, in the Revolutions of the Seasons of the Year, *in that he gives us rain from Heaven and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with food and gladness.* And these standing Arguments of his Providence, tho' they be not so much taken notice of, because they are so common, yet are they daily Miracles, and we can hardly imagine greater, and we should be strangely amazed at them, but that they are so very frequent and familiar. Vol. V.

The case is the same as to Divine Revelation. God hath not thought fit to

gratifie the perverſe Curioſity of Men, by affording to every Man a particular and immediate Revelation of his Mind and Will: but he hath given us a ſtanding Revelation, which at firſt had the greateſt and moſt miraculous Confirmation, and he hath ſtill left us ſufficient Means of being aſſured of the Truth of this Revelation, and of the Confirmation that was at firſt given to it; and we tempt God, by demanding extraordinary Signs, when we may receive ſo abundant Satisfaction in an ordinary way. This being admitted, I ſhall proceed in the

Second Place to ſhew, That it is upon the whole Matter, and all Circumſtances conſider'd, very improbable, that thoſe who reject this publick Revelation from God, ſhould be effectually convinced, tho' one ſhould ſpeak to them from the dead. And this is that which is expreſly aſſerted here in the Text, *If they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded, tho' one roſe from the dead.* Not but that any Man would be very much ſtartled and amazed, if one ſhould come from the dead to warn him of the Danger of his wicked Life; but yet for all that, it is very unlikely that

that they who obſtinately and perverſely refuſe to be convinced by *Moſes* and *the Prophets*, would be effectually perſwaded, (that is, ſo as to be brought to Repentance and Reformation of their Lives) *tho' one ſhould riſe from the dead.* And that for theſe Reaſons. Vol. V.

1. Becauſe if ſuch Miracles were frequent and familiar, it is very probable they would have but very little effect; and unleſs we ſuppoſe them common and ordinary, we have no Reaſon to expect them at all.

2. Men have as great or greater Reaſon to believe the Threatnings of God's Word, as the Diſcourſe of one that ſhould ſpeak to them from the dead.

3. The very ſame reaſon which makes Men to reject the Counſels of God in his Word, would in all probability hinder them from being convinced by a particular Miracle.

4. Experience does abundantly teſtifie, how ineffectual extraordinary ways are to convince thoſe who are obſtinately addicted and wedded to their Luſts.

5. An effectual Perſwaſion (that is, ſuch a Belief as produceth Repentance and a good Life) is the Gift of God, and depends upon the Operation and Concurrence

Vol. V. currence of God's Grace, which there is no reaſon to expect either in an extraordinary way, or in an extraordinary degree, after Men have obſtinately rejected the ordinary Means which God hath appointed to that end.

1. If ſuch Miracles, as a ſpecial Meſſenger from the dead to warn and admoniſh Men, were frequent and familiar, it is very probable they would have but very little effect upon Men; and unleſs we ſuppoſe them common and ordinary, we have no reaſon to expect them at all. For it is unreaſonable at firſt ſight, that the worſt and more obſtinate ſort of Sinners ſhould expect this, as a peculiar Favour and Privilege to themſelves, and that God ſhould not do as much for others, who have deſerved it more, and would probably make better uſe of it; and if theſe things were common, it is very probable that Men would not be much moved by them. It may be, while the Apprehenſion of ſuch a thing were freſh upon them, they would take up ſome good Reſolutions; as Sinners uſually do, while they are under preſent Convictions of Conſcience, and the Hand of God, by ſome great Affliction or Sickneſs, lies heavy upon them: but

but ſtill they would be apt to defer their Repentance, and put it off 'till the preſent Amazement were a little over, and the terrour of their firſt Apprehenſions were abated and worn off by degrees, and after a little while they would return to their former Courſe. And this is too too probable, from what we ſee Men do in other caſes not very much remote from this. It is a very terrible and amazing thing to ſee a Man die, and ſolemnly take his laſt leave of the World. The very Circumſtances of dying Men are apt to ſtrike us with horror; to hear ſuch a Man how ſenſibly he will ſpeak of the other World, as if he were juſt come from it, rather than going to it; how ſeverely he will condemn himſelf for the Folly and Wickedneſs of his Life; with what Paſſion he will wiſh that he had lived better, and ſerved God more ſincerely; how ſeriouſly he will reſolve upon a better Life, if God would be pleaſed to raiſe him up, and try him but once more; with what Zeal and Earneſtneſs he will commend to his beſt Friends and neareſt Relations, a religious and virtuous Courſe of Life, as the only thing that will miniſter Comfort to them when they come to be in his Condition.

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Condition. Such Diſcourſes as theſe, are very apt to move and affect Men for the time, and to ſtir up in them very good Reſolutions, whilſt the preſent Fit and Impreſſion laſts: but becauſe theſe ſights are very frequent, they have ſeldom any great and permanent effect upon Men. Men conſider that it is a very common Caſe, and Sinners take Example and Encouragement from one another; every one is affected for the preſent, but few are ſo effectually convinced, as to betake themſelves to a better Courſe.

And if Apparitions from the dead were as common, as it is for Men to die, we may reaſonably preſume that the Diſcourſes of dead and dying, of thoſe that are going, and thoſe who come from the dead, would have much the ſame effect upon the generality of Men.

But if we ſuppoſe this a ſingular Caſe, (which there is no reaſon to do) in that caſe the Effect would probably be this; a Man that were ſtrongly addicted to his Luſts, and had no Mind to leave them, would be apt when the Fright were over, to be eaſily perſwaded that all this was merely the work of Fancy and Imagination; and the rather, becauſe

cauſe ſuch things did not happen to others, as well as to himſelf. Vol. V.

2. We have as great or greater Reaſon to believe the Warnings or Threatnings of God's Word, as the Diſcourſes of one that ſhould come to us from the dead. For the Threatnings of God's Word againſt ſuch Sins as natural Light convinceth Men of, have the natural Guilt and Fears of Men on their ſide, the particular Teſtimony of every Man's Conſcience, and the concurrent Teſtimony of Mankind to the Probability of the thing; and to give us full Aſſurance of the Truth and Reality of them, we have a credible Relation of great and unqueſtionable Miracles wrought on purpoſe to give Teſtimony to thoſe Perſons who denounced thoſe Threatnings, that they came from God. So that here is a very publick and authentick Teſtimony given to the Threatnings of God's Word, more ſutable to the generality of Mankind, and of greater Authority than a private Apparition, or a ſingle Miracle; and if *that* will not convince Men, why ſhould we ſuppoſe that *this* will?

3. The Very ſame Reaſon which makes Men to *reject the Counſels of God* in

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in his Word, would, in all probability, hinder Men from being convinced by an Apparition from the Dead. It is not generally for want of Evidence, that Men do not yield a full and effectual Assent to the Truth of God's Word, I mean, that they do not Believe it so as to Obey it: but from the Interest of some Lust. The true cause is not in Mens Understandings, and because there is not Reason enough to satisfie them, that the Scriptures are the Word of God; but in the obstinacy of their Wills, which are enslaved to their Lusts. And the Disease being there, it is not to be Cured by more Evidence; but by more Consideration, and by the Grace of God, and better Resolutions.

The Man is addicted to some Vice or other, and that makes him unwilling to entertain those Truths which would check and controul him in his Course. The light of God's word is offensive to him, and therefore he would shut it out. This Account our blessed Saviour gives of the Enmity of the Jews against him and his Doctrine, *John* 3. 19. *Light is come into the World, and Men love darkness rather than light, because their Deeds are evil: for every one that doeth evil, hateth the light,*

light, neither cometh he to the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved. Upon the ſame account it is, that Men reſiſt the Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures; not becauſe they have ſufficient Reaſon to doubt of their Divine Authority; but becauſe they are unwilling to be govern'd by them, and to conform their Lives to the Laws and Precepts of that Holy Book: For the Wills of Men have a great Influence upon their Underſtandings, to make aſſent eaſie or difficult; and as Men are apt to aſſent to what they have a mind to, ſo they are ſlow to believe any thing which croſſeth their Humours and Inclinations; ſo that tho' greater Evidence were offer'd, it is likely it would not prevail with them, becauſe the mater does not ſtick there. Their Wills are diſtemper'd, *Men hate to be reform'd*, and this makes them *caſt the Laws of God behind their Backs*; and if God himſelf ſhould ſpeak to them from Heaven, as he did to the People of *Iſrael*; yet for all that, they might continue *a ſtiff-necked and rebellious People.* Tho' the Evidence were ſuch as their Underſtandings could not reſiſt; yet their Wills might ſtill hold out, and the preſent condition of their Mind

Minds might have no lasting influence upon their Hearts and Lives; such a violent Conviction might affect them for the present, but the Sense of it might perhaps wear off by degrees, and then they would return to their former hardness. Men, by a long and obstinate continuance in sin, may bring themselves to the Temper and Disposition of Devils; who, tho' *they believe and tremble* at the thoughts of God and his Threatnings, yet they are wicked still; for so long as Men retain a strong affection for their Lusts, they will break through all Conviction, and what Evidence soever be offer'd to them, they will find some way or other to avoid it, and to delude themselves. The plain truth of the case is this, (if Men will honestly speak their Consciences, they cannot deny it) they do not call for more Evidence, either because they want it, or are willing to be convinced by it; but that they may seem to have some Excuse for themselves, for not being convinced by that Evidence which is afforded to them.

4thly, Experience does abundantly testifie, how ineffectual extraordinary ways are to convince and reclaim men of depraved Minds, and such as are obstinately

ſtinately addicted to their Luſts. We find many remarkable Experiments of this in the Hiſtory of the Bible. What Wonders were wrought in the ſight of *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians*! yet they were harden'd under all theſe Plagues. *Balaam*, who *greedily follow'd the wages of unrighteouſneſs*, was not to be ſtopt by the admonition of an Angel. The Jews, after ſo many Miracles which their Eyes had ſeen, continued to be a *ſtiff neck'd and gain-ſaying People*; ſo that it is hard to ſay which was more prodigious, the Wonders which God wrought for them, or their Rebellions againſt him; and when *in the fulneſs of time*, the Son of God came and did among them *the works which never man did*, ſuch, as one would have thought, might have brought the worſt People in the World to Repentance, thoſe of *Tyre* and *Sydon*, of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; yet they Repented not. Yea the very thing, which the rich man here in my Text, requeſted of *Abraham* for his Brethren, was done among them; *Lazarus* did *riſe from the dead*, and *teſtified unto them*, and *they were not perſwaded*. Vol. V.

And which is yet more, our Saviour

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himſelf, according to his own Prediction while he was alive, *roſe again from the dead the third day*, and was viſibly taken up into Heaven; and yet how few among them did *believe*, and *give glory to God*! So that we ſee the very thing here ſpoken of in the Text, made good in a famous inſtance; they who *believed not Moſes and the Prophets*, which teſtified of the *Meſſias*, were *not perſwaded* when he *roſe from the dead*.

And does not our own Experience tell us, how little effect the extraordinary Providences of God have had upon thoſe who were not reclaimed by his Word. It is not long ſince God ſhewed himſelf among us, by *terrible things in Righteouſneſs*, and viſited us with three of his ſoreſt Judgments, War, and Peſtilence, and Fire; and yet how does all manner of Wickedneſs and Impiety ſtill reign and rage among us! It is a very ſad Conſideration, to ſee how little thoſe who have outlived theſe Plagues, have been reformed by them; *we have not return'd to the Lord, nor ſought him for all this.*

I may appeal to the experience of particular Perſons. How frequently do we ſee Men, after great Afflictions, and

and tedious Sufferings, and dangerous ſickneſſes, return to their former Evil Courſes! and tho' they have been upon the brink of Eternity, and *the terrors of Death have compaſs'd them about, and the pains of Hell have* almoſt *taken hold of them*, tho' they have had as lively and ſenſible Convictions of another World, as if they had ſpoken with thoſe that had come from thence, or even been there themſelves; yet they have taken no warning, but upon their Deliverance and Recovery, have been as mad, as furious Sinners as they were before; ſo that it ought to be no ſuch wonder to us, which the Text tells us, that *if Men hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded, tho' one roſe from the dead.* Eſpecially, if we conſider in the

5*th* and laſt place, That an effectual perſwaſion (that is, ſuch a Belief as produceth Repentance and a good Life) is the gift of God, and depends upon the operation and concurrence of his Grace, which is not to be expected in an extraordinary way, where Men have obſtinately rejected the ordinary means appointed by God for that end. To be effectually perſwaded to change

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our Lives, and become new Men, is a Work not to be done without the assistance of God's Grace; and there is little reason to expect that God will afford his Grace to those, who reject and despise the Counsels of his Word. The Doctrine of Salvation contained in the Holy Scriptures, and the Promises and Threatnings of God's Word, are the ordinary Means which God hath appointed for the Conversion of Men, and to bring them to Repentance; and if we sincerely use these means, we may confidently expect the concurrence of God's grace, to make them effectual: but if we neglect and resist these means, in confidence that God should attempt our Recovery by some extraordinary ways; tho' he should gratifie our presumptuous and unreasonable Curiosity, so far as to send *one from the dead to testifie unto us*; yet we have no reason to expect the assistance of his Grace, to make such a Conviction effectual to our Repentance, when we have so long despised his Word, and resisted his Spirit, which are *the power of God unto Salvation.*

Without his Grace and Assistance, the most probable means will prove ineffectual,

effectual to alter and change our corrupt Natures; *by Grace we are ſaved*, and *that not of our ſelves; it is the Gift of God.* This Grace is revealed to us in the Goſpel; and the Aſſiſtances of it are conveyed to us by the Goſpel; and it is great preſumption to promiſe to our ſelves, the aſſiſtance of God's Grace in any other way than he hath been pleaſed to promiſe it to us.

And thus I have ſhewn you, as briefly and plainly as I could, how unlikely it is, that thoſe who obſtinately reject a clear and publick Revelation of God, ſhould be effectually convinced and brought to Repentance by any Apparitions from the dead.

I ſhall only make two or three Inferences from this Diſcourſe which I have made, and ſo conclude.

1*ſt.* Since the Scriptures are the publick and ſtanding Revelation of God's Will to Men, and the ordinary Means of Salvation, we may hence conclude, That People ought to have them in ſuch a Language as they can underſtand. This our Saviour plainly ſuppoſeth in the Diſcourſe which he repreſents between *Abraham*, and the Rich Man, deſiring that *Lazarus* might be ſent from

the dead *to his Brethren, to teſtifie unto them*; to which Requeſt *Abraham* would not have given this Anſwer and Advice, *they have Moſes and the Prophets, let them hear them*, had he ſuppoſed that the Scriptures then were, or for the future ought to be lockt up from the People in an unknown Tongue; for the Rich Man might very well have replied, *nay, Father Abraham*, but they are not permitted to have *Moſes and the Prophets* in ſuch a Language as they can underſtand; and therefore there is more need why *one ſhould be ſent from the Dead* to *teſtifie unto them.*

Nor would *Abraham* have ſaid again, *if they hear not Moſes and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded.* For how ſhould Men hear what they cannot underſtand, ſo as to be perſwaded by it.

It is evident then, that our Saviour, according to the Reaſoning of this Parable, takes it for granted, that the Holy Scriptures are the ſtanding and ordinary means of bringing Men to Faith and Repentance, and that the People are to have the free uſe of them. But ſince our Saviour's time, the Church of *Rome* hath found a mighty inconvenience in this, and therefore hath

hath taken the Scriptures out of the Hands of the People. They will not now let them *have Moſes and the Prophets*, the Goſpel of our bleſſed Saviour, and the Writings of his Apoſtles, becauſe they are really afraid they ſhould *hear them*, and by hearing of them, be convinced and *perſwaded* of the Errours and Corruptions of their Church; but inſtead of the Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, they have put into their Hands a Legend of famous Apparitions of *Men from the dead, teſtifying unto them* concerning Purgatory and Tranſubſtantiation, and the Worſhip of the Bleſſed Virgin and the Saints, and the great benefit and refreſhment which Souls in Purgatory have by the Indulgences of the Pope, and the Prayers of the living put up to Saints and Angels on their behalf; ſo that in the Church of *Rome*, quite contrary to our Saviour's method, Men are *perſwaded* of their Religion, of their New Articles of Faith, and Ways of Worſhip, not by *Moſes* and *the Prophets*, not by the Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures (for *they* every where teſtifie againſt them) but by abſurd Romances, and ill-contriv'd Fictions of Ap-

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paritions *from the Dead.* I will diſmiſs this matter with this one Obſervation, that however intereſted and confident Men may ſet a bold face upon any thing, yet it cannot to conſiderate Men but ſeem a very hard caſe, that there ſhould be no Salvation to be had out of the Church of *Rome*; and yet the ordinary, and (in our Saviour's Judgment) the moſt effectual Means of Salvation are not to be had in it.

But I paſs from this, to that which does more immediately concern our Practice.

2*dly*, Let us hear and obey that publick Revelation of God's Will, which in ſo much Mercy to Mankind, he hath been pleaſed to afford to us. This is an ineſtimable Privilege and Advantage which the World in many Ages was deſtitute of, having no other Guide to conduct them to eternal Happineſs but the Light of Nature, and ſome particular Revelations, which now and then God was pleaſed to make of his Will to Men: But now God hath ſet up a great and ſtanding Light in the World, the Doctrine of the holy Scriptures; and by the Goſpel of his bleſſed Son, hath *given the knowledge of Salvation to all Men, for*

the

the remiſſion of their Sins, through the tender Mercies of God, whereby the day ſpring from on high hath viſited us, to give light to them that ſat in darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace, to convince us of the Error of our ways, and to direct us in our Duty. *We, upon whom the ends of the world are come,* do enjoy all the Advantages of divine Revelation which the World ever had, and as great as the World ever ſhall have. *God in theſe laſt days hath ſpoken unto us by his Son,* and if we will not hear him, God will imploy no other extraordinary Prophet and Meſſenger to us. *If the wrath of God* ſo clearly *revealed from Heaven by the Goſpel of our bleſſed Saviour, againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of Men*; if the Terror of the great day, and the fear of eternal Torment; if the dreadful Sufferings of the Son of God for our Sins, and the merciful offers of Pardon and Reconciliation in his Blood, and the glorious hopes of eternal Life and Happineſs will not prevail with us to leave our Sins, and to amend our Lives, we have no reaſon to expect that God ſhould uſe any farther means to reclaim us; that he ſhould ever

make

make any more Attempts for our Recovery. And therefore,

3*dly*, and *laſtly*, Thoſe who are not brought to Repentance, and effectually *perſwaded* by this clear and publick Revelation which God hath made of his Will to Men in the Holy Scriptures, have reaſon to look upon their Caſe as deſperate.

Methinks it ſhould not be a deſirable thing to any of us to be convinced by an Apparition, the thing is ſo dreadful and full of Terror; beſides that it argues Men to be ſtrangely hardned in a bad Courſe, and obſtinately bent upon their evil ways, when nothing will affright them from their Sins, but what will almoſt put them out of their Wits; when nothing will keep them from running into Hell, but a fearful and ghaſtly Meſſenger from thence. What a terrible ſight would it be to any of us, to meet one of our Companions, whom we had lately known in this World, freſh come out of thoſe Flames, with the ſmell of Fire and Brimſtone upon him! What Imagination can paint to it ſelf the dread and horror of ſuch a Spectacle! The Rich Man here in the Parable, when he was in Hell, is repreſented as ſenſible of

of the inconvenience of this, and therefore he did not deſire to be ſent himſelf to his Brethren, but deſired that *Lazarus* might go and teſtifie unto them; he was apprehenſive how frightful a ſight he himſelf muſt needs have been to them, and therefore he deſires that they might have a gentler warning by one, who from out of *Abraham*'s Boſom had ſeen the Miſeries of the damned, but enjoyed the State of the bleſſed. Vol. V.

But let not us tempt God by any ſuch unreaſonable Demand, who ſpeaks to us every day by the plain Declarations of his Word, and hath of late Years call'd ſo loudly upon us by the Voice of his Providence to repent and turn to him; by ſo many Miracles of Mercy and Deliverance, as God hardly ever wrought for any Prince and People, and by ſuch terrible Vollies of Judgments, and full *Viols of wrath*, as have ſeldom been poured out upon any Nation. God ſpeaks to you by his Miniſters, Men like your ſelves (God knows, poor frail and ſinful Men,) but we are ſure, that when we call you to Repentance, we deliver to you the Will and Pleaſure, the Counſels and Commands of the great God, which (whatever Account may

be made of us) do certainly challenge your moſt awful Attention and Regard. And we are ſenſible that we are call'd to a very difficult and unpleaſant work, to contend with the Luſts and Vices of Men, to ſtrive againſt the ſtrong and impetuous Stream of a wicked and perverſe Generation; and nothing in the World could move us to this unwelcome and grievous Importunity, but a great and juſt Senſe of our own Duty, and your Danger. And if we will not take theſe Warnings, why ſhould we expect that God ſhould vouchſafe to ſend an expreſs Meſſenger to us from the other World, to certifie us how all things are there, and that not ſo much to help the weakneſs of our Faith, as to humor the perverſeneſs of our Infidelity? And why ſhould we imagine that this Courſe would prove more effectual? *Let us not deceive our ſelves*, the ſame Luſts which now detain Men ſo ſtrongly in Impenitency and Unbelief, would in all probability hurry them on to Hell, tho' an Angel from Heaven ſhould meet them in their way, to give a ſtop to them. This indeed might ſtartle us; but nothing is like to ſave us, if the Word of God and his Grace do not.

But

But are we in earnest, and would we *be perswaded, if one should rise from the dead?* God hath condescended thus far to us, there is *one risen from the dead to testifie unto us,* Jesus the Son of God, who *died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification,* and is ascended into Heaven, and set down at the right hand of God, to assure us of a blessed Resurrection and a glorious Immortality. And if this will not satisfie us, God will gratifie our Curiosity no farther. If we *will not believe him, whom God hath sent,* and to convince us that he hath sent him, hath *raised him up from the dead, we shall die in our Sins,* and perish in our Impenitency. God hath in great Mercy to Mankind done that which is abundantly sufficient to convince those who are of a teachable Temper and Disposition: But in great Wisdom and Justice he hath not thought fit to provide any Remedy for the wilful Obstinacy and intractable Perverseness of Men.

Now God who hath the Hearts of all Men in his Hands, perswade us all, *to break off our Sins by Repentance, and to give Glory to God,* before Death and Darkness come, and the day of our final Visi-

Viſitation overtake us, when we may perhaps be ſurpriſed by a ſudden ſtroke, or ſeized upon by a violent Diſeaſe, and may have no ſenſe and apprehenſion of our approaching Danger, or if we have, *may find no place for Repentance, tho' we ſeek it with Tears*; which God grant may never happen to be the caſe of any of us, for his Mercy's ſake in Chriſt Jeſus, *To whom with the Father*, &c.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

The Children of this World Wiſer than the Children of Light.

Preached at *Whitehall*, Anno 1683.

LUKE XVI. 8.

For the Children of this World are in their Generation wiſer than the Children of Light.

THESE Words are in the Parable of the Rich Man's Steward, who being call'd upon to give up his Accounts, in order to his being diſcharged from his Office, caſt about with himſelf, what courſe he had beſt to take, to provide for his ſubſiſtence, when he ſhould be turned out of his Employment. At laſt he reſolves upon this, That he will go to his Lords Debtors, and take a favourable Account of them; and inſtead of *a hundred meaſures of Oil, write down fifty,* and

and inſtead of *a hundred meaſures of wheat, write down fourſcore*; that by this means he might oblige them to be kind to him in his Neceſſity. The Lord hearing of this, commends the unjuſt Steward, *becauſe he had done wiſely*; That is, he took notice of his Diſhoneſty; but praiſed his Shrewdneſs and Sagacity, as having done prudently for himſelf, tho' he did not deal juſtly with him; and this is uſual among Men. When we ſee a Man ingeniouſly bad, to commend his Wit, and to ſay it is great pity, he doth not uſe it better, and apply it to good purpoſes. Upon the whole, our Saviour makes this Obſervation; *that the Children of this World, are in their Generation wiſer than the Children of Light*; as if he had ſaid, thus did this worldly Wiſe-man, thus provident was he for his future Security and Subſiſtence. He no ſooner underſtands that he is to be turned out of his Office, but he conſiders what Proviſion to make for himſelf againſt that time. And is it not pity, that good Men do not apply this Wiſdom to better and greater purpoſes? For is not every Man ſuch a Steward, entruſted by God with the Bleſſings of this Life,

Life; and many opportunities of doing good? For all which, ſince he muſt ſhortly give an Account, he ought in all Reaſon ſo to uſe them, as thereby to provide for the Happineſs of another Life, againſt this temporal Life have an end.

And this is all the Parallel intended in this Parable, as we may ſee by our Saviour's Application of it. For Parallels are not to be ſtretched to an exact Parallel in all the Parts and Circumſtances of them; but only to be applyed to the particular point and purpoſe intended. A Parable, and the Moral accomodation of it, being (as one well obſerves) not like two Plains, which touch one another in every part; but like a Globe upon a Plain, which only toucheth in one Point. Thus our Saviour ſeparates the Wiſdom of this Steward from his Injuſtice, and propoſeth *that* to our imitation; *The Children of this World are in their Generation wiſer than the Children of Light.*

The Words are a Compariſon; in which we have

1*ſt*. The Perſons compared, *the Children of this World*, and the *Children of Light*. It is a very uſual Phraſe among

the *Hebrews*, when they would expreſs any thing to partake of ſuch a Nature, or Quality, to call it the Son or Child of ſuch a thing. Thus good Men are call'd *the Children of God*, and bad Men *the Children of the Devil*; thoſe who mind earthly things, and make the things of this World their greateſt aim and Deſign, are called *the Children of this World*; and thoſe who are better enlightned with the Knowledge of their own immortality, and the Belief of a future ſtate after this life, are call'd *the Children of Light*.

2*dly*. Here is the thing, wherein they are compared, and that is, as to their Wiſdom and Prudence.

3*dly*. The Object of this Prudence, which is not the ſame in both; as if the Senſe were, that *the Children of this World are wiſer than the Children of Light*, as to the things of this World; but here are two ſeveral Objects intended, about which the prudence of theſe two ſorts of Perſons is reſpectively exerciſed; the concernments of this World and the other. And our Saviour's meaning is, that *the Children of this world are wiſer in their generation*; that is, in *their way*, viz. as to the Intereſts and Concernments of

of this World, *than the Children of Light* are in *theirs, viz.* as to the Intereſts and Concernments of the other World. Vol. V.

4*thly.* Here is a deciſion of the matter, and which of them it is that excels in point of Prudence, in *their way*; and our Saviour gives it to the *Children of this World*; *they are wiſer in their generation, than the Children of Light.*

Now this Propoſition is not to be taken in the utmoſt ſtrictneſs and rigour; as if it were univerſally true, and without any exception; as if no Man had ever been ſo Wiſe and Provident for his Soul, and the Concernments of another World, as Worldly Men are for the Intereſts and Concernments of this Life. For there are ſome that are Fools at large, and imprudent in their whole conduct and management, both as to the Affairs of this World, and the other; who are in too ſtrict a ſenſe, *the Children of this world.* They mind nothing but this World, and yet are groſly imprudent, even in their proſecution of their temporal Intereſts. They neglect and fore-go all other worldly Advantages, for the ſake of a little ſenſual Pleaſure; and then they loſe and deſtroy that too, by an over hot and

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eager purſuit of it, and turn it at laſt into Gall and Wormwood. And there are others, (as St. *Paul* for inſtance) who, I doubt not, have been as prudent, and zealous, and induſtrious for the promoting of Religion, and the Salvation of themſelves and others, as any Man can be about the Affairs of this preſent Life; and I hope there are ſome ſuch in every Age, but God knows they are very few, and their Wiſdom and Induſtry is ſeldom ſo equal, and conſtant, and uniform, as that of *the Men of this World.*

So that we are to underſtand this Saying of our Saviour's with the ſame Allowance as we generally do all Moral and Proverbial Speeches, that they are true for the moſt part, and the Inſtances and Exceptions to the contrary are very rare. It is ſeldom ſeen, that good Men are ſo wiſe for the Concernments of their Souls, and of Religion, as many worldly Men are for their worldly Intereſts.

In ſpeaking to this Propoſition, I ſhall do theſe *three* things.

Firſt, Confirm and illuſtrate the Truth of it, by conſidering the ſeveral Parts and Properties of Wiſdom.

Secondly, Give ſome probable Account of this, by conſidering what Advantages

ges *the Children of this world* have above *the Children of light.*

Thirdly, I ſhall draw ſome Inferences from the whole, by way of Application.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to confirm and illuſtrate the Truth of this, by conſidering the ſeveral parts and properties of Wiſdom. Now this is Wiſdom, to mind and regard our chief end, and by all means to promote it; and this Regard to our chief End doth expreſs it ſelf chiefly in theſe particulars; in our being firmly fixt and reſolved upon it; in chuſing the fitteſt Means for the compaſſing and accompliſhing of it; in a diligent Uſe of thoſe Means; in an invincible Conſtancy and Perſeverance in the proſecution of it; and in making all things to ſubmit and to ſtoop to it. Theſe are the principal parts and properties of Wiſdom; and I ſhall ſhew, that in all theſe *the Children of this World* do uſually excel *the Children of Light.*

1*ſt.* They are uſually more firmly fixt and reſolved upon their End. Whatever they ſet up for their End, Riches, or Honours, or Pleaſures, they are fixt upon it, and ſteady in the Proſecution of it. If they ſet up for Riches or Honour, they

neglect and deſpiſe Pleaſure, if it croſs either of thoſe Ends. And this fixt Reſolution of the End is the great ſpring of Action, and that which inſpires Men with Vigour and Diligence in the uſe of Means; and the more reſolved Men are upon the End, the more active and induſtrious they will be in the uſe of Means; for the End governs the Means, and gives Law and Meaſure to our Activity and Induſtry in the uſe of them, and ſweetens and allays the Trouble and Difficulty of them.

So that where the End is once firmly fixt and reſolved upon, there will not be wanting fervour of Proſecution; but if we be wavering and unſteady as to our End, this will weaken our Hands, and quench the heat of our endeavours, and abate the eagerneſs of our Purſuit, and according to the degree of it, will derive a debility and inconſtancy into all our Motions. *The double minded Man* (as St. *James* ſays) *being unſtable in all his ways.* Now *the Children of this world* are commonly more fixt and reſolved upon their End, than *the Children of light.* 'Tis rare to ſee the whole Life and Actions of a good Man, ſo conſtantly and uniformly conſpiring to the furtherance of

of his great End, ſo directly tending to the Salvation of his Soul, and the increaſe of his Glory and Happineſs in another World; as the Actions of a worldly Man, and the whole Courſe of his Life do, to the advancing of his worldly Intereſts. The covetous or ambitious Man ſeldom do any thing, to the beſt of their knowledge, that is impertinent to their End, much leſs contrary to it; through every thing that they do, one may plainly ſee the End they aim at, and that they are always true to it: Whereas the beſt Men do many things, which are plainly croſs and contrary to their End, and a great many more, which have no relation to it; and when they mind it, it is rather by fits and ſtarts, than in any even courſe and tenor of Actions. Vol. V.

And of this we have a famous inſtance in that worldly and ſecular Church, which now for ſeveral hundreds of Years hath more ſteadily purſued the End of ſecular Greatneſs and Dominion, than any other Church hath done the Ends of true Religion, the Glory of God, and the Salvation of the Souls of Men, ſo that there is hardly any Doctrine or Practice peculiar to that Church, and differing from our common Chriſtianity,

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but it hath a direct and visible tendency to the promoting of some worldly Interest or other. For instance, Why do they deny the People the Holy Scriptures and the Service of God, in a language which they can understand? but that by keeping them in Ignorance, they may have them in more perfect Slavery and Subjection to them? Why do they forbid their Priests to marry? but that they may have no Interest distinct from that of their Church, and leave all to it when they die? To what end is Auricular Confession? but to keep People in awe, by the knowledge of their Secrets? Why must the Laity only receive the Sacrament in one kind, but to draw a greater Reverence to the Priest, whose Priviledge it shall be to receive in both? And why is the Intention of the Priest necessary to the efficacy of the Sacraments? but to perswade the People, that notwithstanding the gracious Intention of God toward Mankind, they cannot be saved without the good will of the Priest? The Doctrines of Purgatory and Indulgences are a plain device to make their Markets of the Sins and Souls of Men. I might instance in a hundred things more in that Church,

Church, which are of the ſame tendency. This St. *John* foretold ſhould be the Character of the Spirit of Antichriſt, that it ſhould be a worldly Spirit, and the Doctrines of it ſhould ſerve a Secular Intereſt and Deſign, 1 *John* 4. 5. *They are of the World, and they ſpeak from the World, and the World hears them.* What Church is there in the World, ſo true throughout to the intereſt of Religion, as this worldly Church hath been to its own Secular Power and Greatneſs? Vol. V.

2*dly*. *The Children of this world* are wiſer in the choice of Means in order to their End; and this is a great part of Wiſdom. For ſome Means will bring about an End, with leſs pains, and difficulty, and expence of Time than others. And the Men of the World are very ingenious in diſcerning the fitneſs and force of Means to their ſeveral Ends. To what a certainty have Men reduced all the ways and arts of Gain, and growing rich, and of riſing to Honour and Preferment? What long Trains will Men lay to bring about their deſired End? What ſubtil methods have Men diviſed, to inſinuate themſelves into Court; and when they are there, to plant themſelves in the Eye of their Prince, and in the Sunſhine of his Favor?

and

and then they have as many ways of worming others out, as of ſcrewing themſelves in.

But in the Concernments of our Souls, and the Affairs of another World, how dull and injudicious are we? and how awkardly and untowardly do we apply Means to Ends, as if Men were *only wiſe to do evil, but to do good had no underſtanding*, as the Prophet complains? By what incongruous and irregular Means do many (who would ſeem to be, and ſometimes perhaps are very zealous in Religion) endeavour (as they think) to promote God's Glory, by pious Frauds and counterfeit Miracles, and telling officious Lies for God? What a compaſs do many Men fetch to go to Heaven, by innumerable devices of will-Worſhip, by voluntary Severities, neither pleaſing to God, nor profitable to Men? By tedious Pilgrimages, and ſenſeleſs Ceremonies, and innumerable little external Obſervances, of no Virtue and Efficacy in Religion? and by wandring through a wilderneſs of Opinions, and the buſhes and brakes of unprofitable Queſtions, and Controverſies? Whereas the way to Heaven lies plain and ſtraight before us, conſiſting in Simplicity

city of Belief, and in Holineſs and Innocency of Life. Not but that there are great differences in the Church of *Rome*, between the Secular Prieſts and and the Regular; betwen the Janſeniſts and the Jeſuits: but they ſtill unite in a common Intereſt, and are ſubject to *Antichriſt* their common Head. They do not ſeparate from one another, and excommunicate one another, and declare againſt one another, that they are not of the true Church. *Satan never caſts out Satan*; and tho' he love Diviſions among Chriſtians, yet he always takes care, that *his own Kingdom be not divided againſt it ſelf*, ſo as to endanger the Ruin of it. And whenever they have any hopeful deſign for the extirpation of Proteſtants, they can lay aſide their Enmities, and be reconciled in ſuch a deſign. Then the Pope and the Kings of the Earth *take counſel together*, and like *Herod* and *Pilate*, when Chriſt was to be crucified, can be made Friends at a days warning. Whereas the Diviſions of the true Church are pernicious to it; and as we ſee at this Day among our ſelves, our ſenſeleſs Differences and wild Heats on both ſides, do contribute to the ſetting up of Popery, and the ruin

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3*dly. The Children of this world* are commonly more diligent in the Uſe of Means for the obtaining of their End; they will ſweat and toil, and take any Pains, *riſe up early, and lie down late, and eat the bread of Carefulneſs*; their thoughts are continually running upon their Buſineſs, and they catch at every Oportunity of promoting it; they will pinch Nature, and haraſs it; and rob themſelves of their Reſt, and all the Comfort of their Lives, to raiſe their Fortune and Eſtate. What Drudges were *Cæſar* and *Alexander* in the way of Fame and Ambition? How did they tire themſelves and others with long and tedious Marches? To what Inconveniences and Dangers did they expoſe themſelves and Thouſands more? What Havock and Deſtruction did they make in the World, that they might gain to themſelves the empty Title of Conquerors of it? When the Men of the World engage in any Deſign, how intent are they upon it, and with what vigour do they proſecute it? They do not counterfeit a Diligence, and ſeem to be more ſerious and

and induſtrious than in truth they are; they are rather Hypocrites the other way, and would conceal their Covetouſneſs and Ambition, and not ſeem to aſpire after Riches, and Honours, ſo much as indeed they do. Vol. V.

But in the purſuit of better things, how cold and remiſs are we? With what a careleſs indifference do moſt Men mind their Souls? How negligent and formal, and many times Hypocritical are they in the Service of God, and the Exerciſe of Religion? With what a pitiful Courage, and with what faint Spirits do they reſiſt Sin, and encounter the Temptations of it; and how often, and how eaſily are they foil'd and baffl'd by them?

4*thly*. The Men of the World are more invincibly conſtant and pertinacious in the purſuit of Earthly things; they are not to be bribed or taken off by favour or fair Words; not to be daunted by Difficulties, or daſht out of Countenance by the Frowns and Reproaches of Men. Offer an Ambitious Man any thing ſhort of his End and Aim, to take him off from the proſecution of it; he ſcorns the motion, and thinks you go about to fool him out of

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of his Intereſt. Bait a Covetous Man with Temptations of Pleaſure, to get his Money from him; how generouſly will this mean ſpirited Man trample upon Pleaſure, when it would tempt him from his Deſign of being rich?

Difficulties do not daunt them, but whet their Courage, and quicken their Endeavours, and ſet a keener edge upon their Spirits. Give an Ambitious Man almoſt a demonſtration of the impoſſibility of his attempt; *contrà audentior ibit*, he will go on ſo much the more boldly and reſolutely. In the ways of Religion Men are apt to be diſcouraged and put out of Countenance, by Contempt and Reproach: but a Covetous Man is not to be jeer'd and flurted out of his Money and Eſtate; he can be content to be Rich, and give leave to thoſe that are not ſo, to laugh at him.

Populus mihi ſibilat, at mihi plaudo.

The Rich Worldling can hug himſelf and his Bags, when the World hiſſeth at him; he can bear *to be hated, and perſecuted, and have all manner of Evil ſpoke againſt him* for *Money ſake*. And in the purſuit of theſe Deſigns, Men will, with great Reſolution, encounter

counter Enmity and Oppoſition, and endure great Sufferings and Perſecution. How many have been Martyrs to their Luſts, and have Sacrificed their Eaſe and Health, and even their Lives in the proſecution of their Ambitious, and Covetous, and Voluptuous Deſigns? Vol. V.

But on the other hand, how eaſily are Men check'd and diverted from a good Courſe, by the Temptations and Advantages of this World? How many are cold in their Zeal for Religion, by the Favour and Friendſhip of this World? And as their Goods and Eſtate have grown greater, their Devotion hath grown leſs. How apt are they to be terrified at the apprehenſion of Danger and Sufferings; and by their fearful Imaginations, to make them greater than they are; and with the People of *Iſrael*, to be diſhearten'd from all further Attemps of entring *into the land of promiſe*, becauſe it is *full of Giants and the Sons of Anak*? How eaſily was *Peter* frighted into the denyal of his Maſter? And when our Saviour was apprehended, how did his Diſciples forſake him, and flie from him? And tho' they were conſtant afterwards to the Death, yet it was a great while before

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before they were perfectly armed and ſteel'd againſt the fear of Suffering.

5*thly*. The men of the World will make all things ſtoop and ſubmit to that, which is their great End and Deſign; their End rules them, and governs them, and gives Law to all their Actions; they will make an Advantage of every thing, and if it will not ſerve their End one way or other, they will have nothing to do with it. If an ambitious Man ſeek Wealth, it is but in order to his Deſign, to purchaſe Friends, and ſtrengthen his Intereſt, and make his riſing the eaſier; he will lay his whole Eſtate at the ſtake, rather than miſs of his End. The covetous Man will quit his Pleaſure, when it lies croſs to his Intereſt; if he have any expenſive Luſt, and chargeable Vice, he will turn it off, or exchange it for ſome more frugal and profitable Sin.

But in the affairs of Religion, and the concernments of our Souls, how frequently do Men act without a due Regard and conſideration of their great End? and inſtead of making other things ſubmit to it, they often bow and bend it to their inferiour Intereſts. They make Heaven ſtoop to Earth, and Religion to

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ſerve a worldly Deſign; and the glory of God to give way to gain; and the great Concernments of their Souls, and their eternal Salvation, to their Temporal Profit and Advantage. The Men of the World are generally true to their great End, and pay it that Reſpect which is due to it, and will ſuffer nothing to take place of it in their Eſteem and Affection; and if Men were as wiſe for their Souls and for another World, they would bring all things to their great End, and make all the Concernments of this Temporal Life to yield and give way to the great Concernments of their Eternal Happineſs. I proceed in the

Second Place to give ſome Account of this, whence it comes to paſs, that *the Children of this World are wiſer in their generation than the Children of Light*. And this I ſhall do, by conſidering what Advantages *the Children of this World* have, as to the Affairs of this World, above what good Men have, as to the Concernments of another World. I ſhall inſtance in four or five of the chief.

1*ſt*, The Things of this World are preſent and ſenſible, and becauſe of their nearneſs to us, are apt to ſtrike powerfully upon our Senſes, and to affect us

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mightily, to excite our Desires after them, and to work strongly upon our Hopes and Fears: but the things of another World being remote from us, are lessen'd by their distance, and consequently are not apt to work so powerfully upon our Minds; they are invisible to us, and only discerned by Faith, which is a more obscure and less certain Perception of things, than we have of those Objects which are presented to our bodily Eyes. *The things which God hath prepared for them that love him*, the Glory and Happiness of the next World, are *things which Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. The Children of Light* do not see God, as *the Children of this World* see *Mammon.*

2*dly*, The sensual Delights and Enjoyments of this World, are better suited and more agreable to the corrupt and degenerate Nature of Men, than Spiritual and heavenly things are to those that are regenerate. In this lapsed and degenerate state of Mankind, Appetite and Sense are apt to prevail above Reason; and therefore those things which are most delightful to Sense we savour and mind, and love to busie our selves about them, because they are most suitable to the animal life, which is the governing Principle of corrupt Nature. And

And the Reaſon of this is plain, becauſe that Principle in worldly and ſenſual Men which purſues earthly things, is in thoſe who are unregenerate, entire and undivided, and conſequently the Affections and Inclinations of the whole Man do all tend one way, and run out towards thoſe things in a full and undivided Stream: Whereas good Men are but regenerate in part, and tho' they have a principle of ſpiritual Life in them, yet their Affections are divided, and there is a great ſtrugling and conflict between fleſh and Spirit, and it is a great while before the ſpiritual Principle doth clearly prevail, and get a perfect Victory over our ſenſual Appetites and Inclinations. Mens Affections to the World are entire and unbroken, and therefore they purſue theſe things with all their might: But the beſt Men are but good in part; and that heavenly Principle which is in them, is very much hindred in its Operations by a contrary Principle, our earthly and ſenſual Inclinations, which are hardly ever perfectly ſubdu'd and brought under in this World.

3*dly*, The worldly Man's Faith, and Hope, and Fear of preſent and ſenſible things, is commonly ſtronger than a

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good Man's Faith, and Hope, and Fear of things future and eternal. Now Faith, and Hope, and Fear, are the great Principles which govern and bear ſway in the Actions and lives of Men. If a Man be once firmly perſwaded of the reality of a thing, and that it is good for him, and poſſeſt with good hopes of obtaining it, and great fears and apprehenſions of the Danger of miſſing it, this Man may almoſt be put upon any thing. The Merchant trafficks, and the Husbandman plows and ſows in Faith and Hope, becauſe he is convinced that Bread is neceſſary to the ſupport of Life, and hopes that God will ſo bleſs his Labours, that he ſhall reap the fruit of them; and plainly ſees, that if he do not take this Pains, he muſt ſtarve. But how few are there that believe, and hope, and fear concerning the things of another World, as *the Children of this world* do concerning the things of this World? If any Man asks me, how I know this? I appeal to Experience; it is plain and viſible in the Lives and Actions and Endeavours of Men. Good Men are ſeldom ſo effectually and throughly perſwaded of the Principles of Religion, and the truth of the Sayings contained

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in the holy Scriptures, as the men of the World are of their own Sayings and Proverbs. Men do not believe that *Honeſty is the beſt Policy*, or as *Solomon* expreſſeth it, that *he that walketh uprightly walketh ſurely*; as the Men of the World believe their own Maxims, that *a Man may be too honeſt to live*; that *plain Dealing is a Jewel, but he that wears it ſhall die a Beggar*. Few Men's hopes of Heaven are ſo powerful and vigorous, and have ſo ſenſible an effect upon their Lives, as the worldly Man's hopes of Gain and Advantage. Men are not ſo afraid to ſwear, as they are to ſpeak Treaſon; they are not ſo firmly perſwaded of the danger of Sin to their Souls and Bodies in another World, as of the danger to which ſome Crimes againſt the Laws of Men do expoſe their Temporal Lives and Safety; and therefore they will many times venture to offend God, rather than incur the Penalty of human Laws.

4*thly*, The Men of the World have but one Deſign, and are wholly intent upon it, and this is a great Advantage. he that hath but one thing to mind, may eaſily be skill'd and excel it. When a Man makes one thing his whole buſineſs,

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no wonder if he be very knowing and wiſe in that. Now the Men of the World mind worldly things, and have no care and concernment for any thing elſe. It is a ſaying I think of *Thomas Aquinas*, *Cave ab illo qui unicum legit librum*: *He is a dangerous Man that reads but one Book*; he that gives his Mind but to one thing, muſt needs be too hard for any Man at that. Application to one thing, eſpecially in matters of Practice, gains a Man perfect Experience in it, and Experience furniſheth him with Obſervations about it, and theſe make him wiſe and prudent in that thing.

But good Men, tho' they have a great affection for Heaven and heavenly things, yet the buſineſs and neceſſities of this Life, do very much divert and take them off from the Care of better Things, they are divided between the Concernments of this Life and the other; and tho' there be but *one thing neceſſary* in compariſon, yet the Conveniencies of this Life are to be regarded; and tho' our Souls be our main care, yet ſome Conſideration muſt be had of our Bodies, that they may be fit for the ſervice of our Souls; ſome Proviſion muſt be made for their preſent Support, ſo long as we continue

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in these earthy Tabernacles; and this will necessarily ingage us in the World, so that we cannot always and wholly apply our selves to heavenly things, and mind them, as the Men of the World do the Things of this World. Vol. V.

5*thly*, and *lastly*, The Men of the World have a greater Compass and Liberty in the Pursuit of their worldly Designs, than good Men have in the Prosecution of *their* Interest. *The Children of Light* are limited and confined to the use of lawful Means for the compassing of their ends; but the Men of the World are not so strait laced, *quocunque modo rem*, they are resolved upon the Point, and will stick at no Means to compass their End. They do not stand upon the nice Distinctions of good and evil, of right and wrong, invented by speculative and scrupulous Men, to puzle business, and to hinder and disappoint great Designs. If *Ahab* have a Mind to *Naboth*'s Vineyard, and *Naboth* will not let him be honest, and have it for a valuable Consideration, he will trie to get it a cheaper way. *Naboth* shall by false Witness be made a Traitor, and his Vineyard by this Means shall be forfeited to him. And thus the unjust Steward in the Parable provided

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for himſelf, he wronged his Lord, to ſecure a retreat to himſelf in the time of his Diſtreſs.

The *Third* and *laſt* thing only remains, to make ſome Inferences from what hath been ſaid, by way of Application. And,

1*ſt*, Notwithſtanding the Commendation which hath been given of the Wiſdom of this World, yet upon the whole matter, it is not much to be valued and admired. It is indeed great in its way and kind: but it is applied to little and low Purpoſes, imployed about the Concernments of a ſhort Time and a few Days, about the worſt and meaneſt part of our ſelves, and accompanied with the neglect of greater and better things, ſuch as concern our Soul, and our whole Duration, even our Happineſs to all Eternity. And therefore that which the World admires and cries up for Wiſdom, is in the eſteem of God, who judgeth of things according to Truth, but Vanity and Folly. *The wiſdom of the world* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *is fooliſhneſs with God.* The Rich Man in the Parable, who increaſed his Goods, and enlarged his Barns, and laid up for many Years, did applaud himſelf, and was no doubt applauded by others for a very wiſe Man: but becauſe *he laid*

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up Treaſure for himſelf, and was not rich towards God, that is, did not employ his Eſtate to good and charitable Purpoſes, therefore God, who calls no body out of his right Name, calls this Man *Fool; Thou Fool, this night ſhall thy Soul be taken from thee, and then whoſe ſhall all theſe things be?* And our Saviour here in the Text, while he commends the *Wiſdom* of *the Children of this World*, he adds that which is a conſiderable blemiſh and abatement to it, *The Children of this World are wiſer*, εἰς τὴν γενεὰν τὴν ἑαυτῶν, *for their Age*, for the concernments of this preſent Life; but this is but a ſhort and purblind Wiſdom, which ſees but a little way, and conſiders only things preſent and near at hand: whereas true Wiſdom hath a larger and farther Proſpect, and regards the future as well as the preſent, and takes care to provide for it. Nay our Saviour gives the Wiſdom of this World it's utmoſt due, when he ſays, *The Children of this World are wiſe for their generation*; for this is the very beſt that can be ſaid of it, it ſeldom looks ſo far, and holds out ſo long. Many Men have ſurvived their own Projects, and have lived to ſee the Folly and ill Fate of their covetous and ambitious Deſigns. So the Prophet tells us, *Jer.* 17. 11. *As the Partridge ſitteth on eggs, and*

and hatcheth them not; ſo he that getteth riches, and not by right, ſhall leave them in the midſt of his days, and at his end ſhall be a Fool.

This is Wiſdom, to regard our main Intereſt; but if we be wrong in our End, (as all worldly Men are) the faſter and farther we go, the more fatal is our Error and Miſtake. *The Children of this World* are out in their End, and miſtaken in the Main; they are wiſe for this World, which is inconſiderable to Eternity; wiſe for a little while, and Fools for ever.

2*dly*, From what hath been ſaid we may infer, that if we loſe our Souls, and come ſhort of eternal Happineſs, it is through our own Fault and groſs Neglect; for we ſee that Men are wiſe enough for this World; and the ſame Prudence, and Care, and Diligence applyed to the Concernments of our Souls, would infallibly make us happy. Nay our Saviour here in the Text tells us, that uſually leſs Wiſdom and Induſtry, than the Men of this World uſe about the things of this World, is exerciſed by *the Children of Light*, who yet at laſt, through the Mercy of God, do attain eternal Life.

So that it is very plain, that if Men would but take that care for their immortal Souls, which they generally do for

for their frail and dying Bodies, and be as heartily concerned for the unſeen World, and for Eternity, as they are for things viſible and temporal, they would with much more certainty gain Heaven, than any Man can obtain worldly Riches and Honours. And can we in Conſcience deſire more, than to be happy for ever, upon as eaſie and upon more certain Terms, than any Man can be rich or great in this World? For we may miſs of theſe things after all our Travel and Pains about them; or if we get them, we may loſe them again: But if we *ſeek the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*, if we be ſincerely good, we are ſure to have the Reward of it, even that *eternal Life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promiſed*; if we *lay up for our ſelves Treaſures in Heaven*, they will be ſafe and ſecure there, where *no Moth can corrupt, nor Thieves break through and ſteal.*

If we would ſeriouſly think of the other World, and were throughly poſſeſt with a firm belief of the eternity of that Happineſs or Miſery, which remains for Men after this Life, we ſhould pray to God, and hear his Word, and perform all the duties of Religion, with the ſame Care and Concernment, with the ſame fervour and intention of Mind, as

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Men proſecute their worldly buſineſs. Were we fully perſwaded of the unſeen Glories and Torments of the other World, we ſhould be much more affected with them, than with all the Temptations and Terrors of Senſe; becauſe in Reaſon they are much more conſiderable. The diſgrace of the Pillory will fright Men from Perjury; and will not everlaſting Shame and Confuſion? The fear of Death will deter many Men from robbing and ſtealing, who would perhaps venture upon theſe Crimes, if there were no danger in them; and will not the Horrors of the *ſecond Death*, of *the Worm that dies not, and the Fire that is not quenched*, have as great an awe and influence upon us? If they have not, it is a ſign, that we do not equally believe the danger of Human Laws, and the Damnation of Hell.

Surely Men have not the ſame belief of Heaven, and Affection for it, that they have for this World. If they had, their Care and Diligence about theſe things would be more equal. For we are not ſo weak as we make our ſelves; we are not yet ſo degenerate, but if we would ſet our ſelves ſeriouſly to it, and earneſtly beg the Aſſiſtance of God's Grace, we might come to know our Du-

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ty, and our Wills might be engaged to follow the directions of our Underſtandings, and our Affections to obey the Command of our Wills, and our Actions to follow the Impulſe of our Affections. Much of this is naturally in our Power; and what is wanting, the Grace of God is ready to ſupply. We can go to Church, and we can hear the Word of God, and we can conſider what we hear, we can pray to God, and ſay *we believe, Lord help our unbelief*, and enable us to do what thou requireſt of us; and we can forbear a great many Sins, which we raſhly and wilfully run into; a great preſent Danger will fright us from Sin, a terrible Storm will drive us to our Devotion, and teach us to pray; a ſharp fit of the Gout, will take a Man off from drinking; the Eye of a Maſter or Magiſtrate will reſtrain Men from many things, which they ſay they cannot forbear. So that we do but counterfeit, and make our ſelves more Criples than we are, that we may be pitied; for if Fear will reſtrain us, it is a ſign that we can forbear; if *the rod of Affliction will fetch it out* of us, and make us do that, which at other times we ſay we are unable to do, this is a demonſtration that it is in us, and that the thing is in our Power.

It is true, we can do nothing that is good without the Aſſiſtance of God's Grace: but that Aſſiſtance which we may have for asking, is in effect in our own Power. So that if the matter were ſearched to the bottom, it is not want

want of Power that hinders us from doing our Duty; but Sloth and Negligence; for God hath *given us exceeding great and precious Promiſes, whereby we may be made Partakers of a divine Nature*; and by virtue whereof, if we be not wanting to our ſelves, we may *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, and perfect Holineſs in the fear of God.*

3*dly* and *laſtly*, What a Shame and Reproach is this to *the Children of Light*! Our Saviour ſpeaks this by way of upbraiding, as we may judge by the terms of compariſon which he uſeth, that *the Children of this World* ſhould be *wiſer than the Children of Light*, that is, than *Wiſdom's own Children*; and that they ſhould be *wiſer in their Generation*, that is, for the concernments of a ſhort and inconſiderable Time, than the others are for all Eternity.

How ſhould it make our Blood to riſe in our Faces, and fill us with Confuſion, that the Men of this World ſhould be more prudent and skilful in the contrivance and management of their little Affairs, more reſolute and vigorous in the proſecution of them; than we are about the everlaſting Concernments of our Souls! That a worldly Church ſhould uſe wiſer and more effectual Means to promote and uphold Ignorance, and Error, and Superſtition; than we do to build up the true Church of Chriſt in Knowlege, and Faith, and Charity! That the Men of the World ſhould toil and take more

Pains

Pains for *the deceitful Riches*; than we do for *the true*; and be contented to hazard more for *a corruptible Crown*, than we for *an incorruptible*! That they ſhould love Pleaſure more, than we do God, and mind their Bodies and temporal Eſtates more, than we do our Souls and our eternal Happineſs!

Do but obſerve the Men of the World, what a Pace they go, what large and nimble ſteps they take in the purſuit of earthly things, they do not ſeek Riches *as if they ſought them not*, and love the World *as if they loved it not*, and enjoy the preſent delights of this World, *as if they poſſeſt them not*; tho' *the faſhion of this world paſſeth away*: but we ſeek Heaven, *as if we ſought it not*, and love God *as if we loved him not*, and mind Eternity and the World to come, *as if we minded them not*; and yet *the faſhion of* that *World doth* not *paſs away*.

But to all this it may be ſaid, you have already told us, that *the Children of this world* have ſo many Advantages above *the Children of Light*, that it is no wonder if they excel and outſtrip them; and it is very true, that in many reſpects they have the Advantage of them. But if *the Children of Light* would look about them, and take all things into conſideration, they might ſee ſomething very conſiderable to ballance the Advantages on the other ſide. It is true, the things of this World are preſent and ſenſible: but ſo long as we have ſufficient Aſſurance of the reality of a future State, and of the Rewards and Puniſh-

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ments of it, the Greatneſs and Eternity of theſe is ſuch an amazing Conſideration, that no diſtance can render them inconſiderable to a prudent and thinking Man. And tho' the Men of the World have an entire Principle, which is not divided between God and the World; whereas in good Men there is a great conflict of contrary Principles, the Fleſh and Spirit: yet this diſadvantage is likewiſe ballanced by that powerful Aſſiſtance of God's Grace, which is promiſed to all good Men, who heartily beg it of him, and are ſincerely reſolved to make uſe of it. And *laſtly*, tho' the Men of the World have many Ways to compaſs their Ends: yet *the Children of Light* have one great and infallible one. All the Means which the Men of the World uſe to accompliſh their Deſigns, may fail and miſcarry; for *the Race is not to the ſwift, nor the Battel to the ſtrong, nor yet Bread to the wiſe, nor Riches to Men of underſtanding, nor Favour to Men of skill; but time and chance happen to all*: but he that ſincerely ſerves God, and uſeth the Means for the attaining of everlaſting Salvation, is ſure to attain it; if we *ſeek the righteouſneſs of God* as we ought, we ſhall certainly *be admitted into his Kingdom*. And this ſurely is an unſpeakable Advantage which *the Children of Light* have above *the Children of this World*, that if we faithfully uſe the Means, we cannot fail of the End, *if we have our fruit unto holineſs, our end ſhall be everlaſting Life*; Which God of his infinite Goodneſs grant to us all, for his Mercy's ſake.

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